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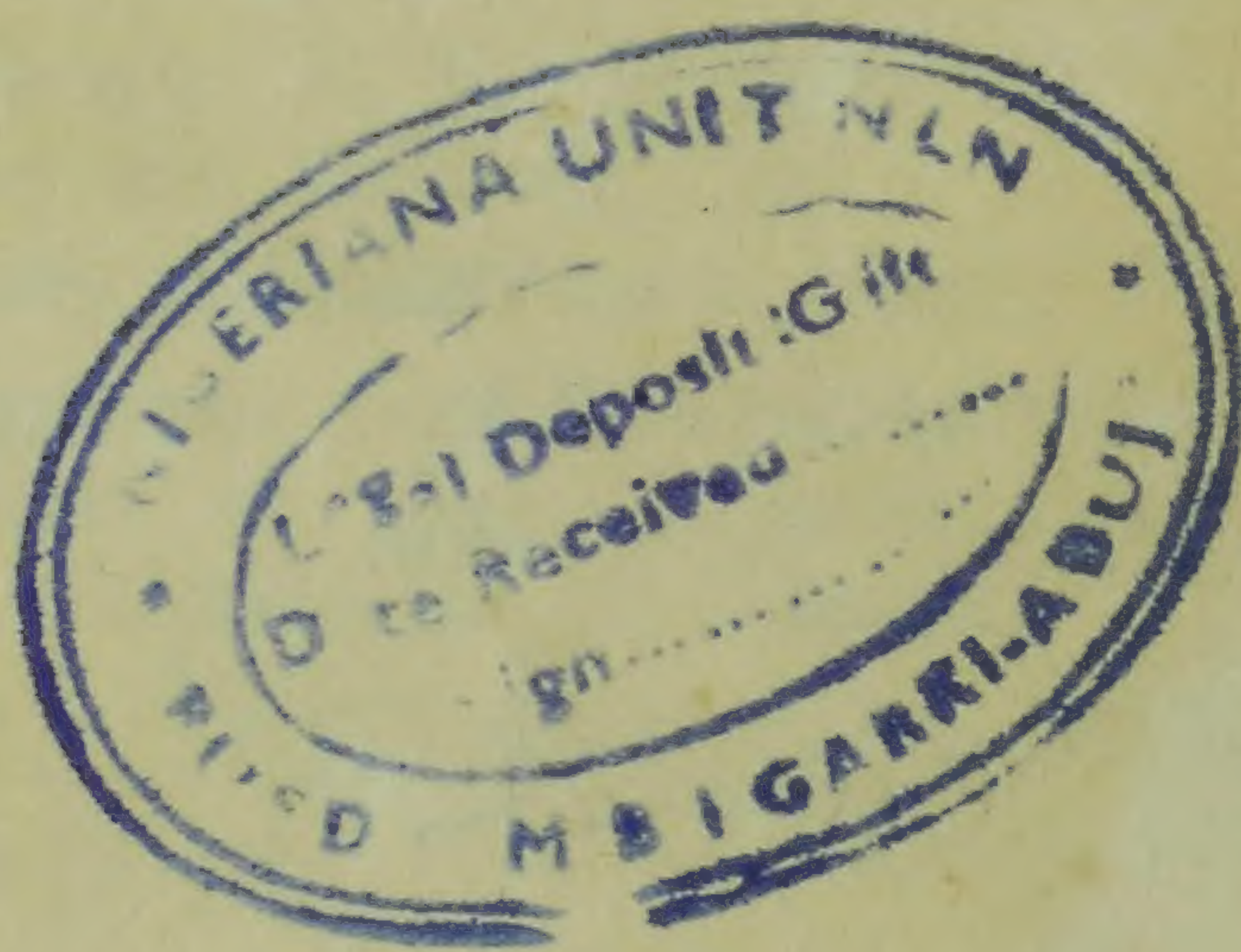
Studies
in the history of
pre-colonial
BORNEO

edited by
BALA USMAN
& NUR ALKALI

Studies in the
History of
Pre-Colonial
Borno



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Bala Usman & Nur Alkali



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History of the Sokoto Caliphate edited by Y. B. Usman, 1979. His doctoral thesis for A.B.U., *The Dynamics of Administrative Change In Pre-Colonial Borno : A Comparative Study of the Sayfawa Period with that of the Shaykh Muham md Al-Amin Al-Kanem*, Ph.D. Thesis, A.B.U. 1980, is being prepared for publication.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is made up of ten studies of the history of pre-colonial Borno, covering some important aspects of the historical experience of its people, and some of their neighbours, from early times to the European colonial conquest at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is made up of four sections dealing with, aspects of its pre-history and early history; its economy; its political and administrative organisation; and its external relations and diplomacy.

Eight of the ten papers were written specially for the Borno Seminar organised by the Departments of History of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and of Abdullahi Bayero College, Kano. This seminar was conducted at Kaduna, Zaria, Kano and Maiduguri, throughout the 1972/73 session. As for the other two papers, the one by Graham Connah was written at a special invitation for this book; and the one by Nur Alkali on the economic factors was written originally for the International Seminar on the Economic History of Central Savannah of West Africa, held in Kano in 1976.

The approach and emphases in the various papers differs in many respects, but they are all derived from research into the primary sources by the authors, who either belong to Borno, or to neighbouring areas deeply influenced by Borno (including Muhammad al-Hajj, from the Darfur region of the Republic of the Sudan). The two other authors, Abdullahi Smith and Graham Connah have, in the course of their research, developed intimate relations with the environmental and cultural reality of Borno.

Perhaps it is as a result of this that the ten chapters combined may give an impression to the reader of a too intense focus on the historical importance of Borno. There is no doubt, that Borno tends to breed a form of intense pre-occupation with it, from those inside it; and an equally intense fascination, from those outside it. This is true of its pre-colonial past, as it is of its contemporary cultural and political situation.

This seems to be in keeping with the metropolitan status it attained as part of Kanem Borno, and on its own, for a large part of Western and Saharan Africa, for the best part of a millenium. It is also in keeping with the political intensity and cultural richness of the historical experience of its people, giving its position in contemporary Nigeria a uniqueness of its own.

Some of the chapters focus on the formal structure of the political and administrative organisation derived largely from palace, court and other ruling class sources. This applies to the two chapters on political and administrative organisation by Nur Alkali and Kyari Tijjani. They attempt to correct the historical perspective developed by colonialist historiography which reduces pre-colonial African governments to gangs of lawless predators, and slave raiders, with no formal and regular political, administrative and juridical structures and legitimation, beyond violence and force.

One of the other chapters, the one by Abdulkadir Benisheikh, on the revenue system of the government of Borno in the 19th century, subjects the formal political and administrative machinery of revenue collection, and the Islamic ideology underpinning it, to a brief, but incisive survey. He attempts to show the extent to which this formal structure, and the ruling Islamic ideology supporting it were instruments for the subjugation and exploitation of the Bornoan peasantry, artisans and pastoralists by an aristocracy closely patronising an Islamic intelligentsia, whose influential role in the internal political system and external relations of Borno is brought out in the various chapters.

That Borno had extensive and far-flung, external relations is well known. The chapter by Muhammad al-Hajj documents, in a way which is specific and concrete, three cases of these diplomatic exchanges in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, the Ottoman Caliphs of Istanbul and the Sa'adian Caliphs of Morrocco. The documentary material in the appendices to this chapter, should be very useful in teaching, and all

forms of political and cultural activity, including drama and literature, where the actual content of pre-colonial African diplomacy is a matter of interest.

Borno's long-standing and intensive connections with the Gongola region and the Upper Benue area, and with Hausaland, are treated in the chapters by Sa'ad Abubakar and Yusufu Bala Usman. Sa'ad Abubakar shows the weight of Bornoan influence in the area to its south, at almost all levels, from that of the peopling of the area, to economic, cultural and political activity. His reduction of everything coming from Borno to "Kanuri" (making "Barebari"/"Kolejo"/etc and "Kanuri" synonymous) cannot be excused. The book contains indications of the important role of the non-Kanuri nationalities like the Marghi, Bolewa, Bura, Bedde, Felata, Shuwa Arab, Budduma, Gwoza, Ngizim, in the history of Borno. Sa'ad Abubakar has hinted at this in his reference to the *Gadzama Chronicle*, but this is nowhere developed. A major area of future research is in the historical experience of these nationalities in their autonomous polities within Borno; in the formation of the Kanuri language, culture and people; and in the formation of the Bornoan aristocracy, slave bureaucracy, merchant and the intelligentsia.

In the chapter by Yusufu Bala Usman and attempt is made to show that the widespread view that Borno's relation with the Hausa states was largely made up of warfare and imperial domination is not based on the evidence in the internal, primary sources of the two areas. Far more important than military encounters, of which the author can only identify four instances in a period of about three hundred years, were the migrations of people between Borno and Hausaland, commerce, cultural and educational exchanges. The author attempts to locate the basis of Bornoan influence in the Hausa States in the changing political relationships between the *sarakuna* (rulers) on the one hand, and the *mallamai* (scholars) and merchants, within their states, on the other, who for reasons of their educational and trading

interests and the force of the Islamic identity are subject to strong Bornoan influences. The paper's emphasis, however, lies too much on the evidence of these relations within the Hausa states, and the evidence from within Borno is scanty. Thus the claims of many of the *mallamai* and some of the Fulani pastoral clans of Hausaland to be from Borno is not substantiated beyond the claims themselves, and this is not sufficient. Primary research in Borno on its relations with Hausaland and other neighbouring areas is required for which these two chapters by Sa'ad Abubakar and Yusufu Bala Usman provide a preliminary introduction.

The chapter on economic factors by Nur Alkali stands as one of the very few attempts at surveying the ecology, demography and economic relations of a pre-colonial African state and the relations of these to the policies of a government. It opens several areas for further research. The paper itself could have gone further in examining how the economic activity of the fisherman, pastoralists, salt-makers and merchants of the Lake Chad and the Komadugu Yobe valley, for example, themselves, determined the economic, social and political conditions from which the Seifuwa monarchy emerged and survived. To what extent, for example, did the mining of salt and natron in the Manga areas favour Bornoan expansion westwards and the emergence of the border province of the Galadimas of Borno of Nguru, in the seventeenth century?

The subject of the Galadima's of Borno is treated in another chapter by Abdulkadir Benisheikh. He actually treats their decline in the nineteenth century. The chapter brings light to a little known, but very significant part of the history of the relations between the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno in the nineteenth century. This border area in which emerged the powerful state of Damagaram with its capital at Zinder, is one whose history earlier writers should have more fully integrated with that of the rest of the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno. Developments in this area were closely connected with the political crises in Hadejia and Bauchi, and later Kano, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

One thing the chapter by Benisheikh shows is that it is no more feasible in Nigerian historiography to treat the history of Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate as distinct, as it is to treat history of the Ibadan and Oyo polities in the nineteenth century separate from that of the Sokoto Caliphate, particularly its powerful southern emirates of Ilorin and Nupe. In this brief contribution Abdulkadir Benisheikh highlights the continuities, and high level of integration, of the history of polities, which colonial, and even neo-colonial historiography, distorts, by treating as separate and distinct.

The chapter by Graham Connah provides a brief introduction to the archaeological work done on the pre-history and history of Borno. It encourages the reader to delve more into it, particularly on issues like, when the Kanuri, and the Marghi, for example, emerged as distinct identities of peoples produced from an ancient, pre-Seifuwa, Chadian civilisation.

The role of the Seifuwa dynasty itself, particularly of the famous legend associated with it, is subjected to his usual path-breaking treatment by Abdullahi Smith, whose contribution to this publication goes beyond this particular chapter, as he was the supervisor of the postgraduate research of four of the eight contributors, namely, Sa'ad Abubakar, Muhammad Al-Hajj, Abdulkadir Benisheikh, Yusufu Bala Usman; and also worked closely with Kyari Tijjani, and initiated and guided the archaeological research of Graham Connah.

The study of the origins of traditions of origin is an essential task in African historiography; and now it seems even in African sociology and political science, with regards to the numerous dubious claims of founders of modern African states, cities, and even political parties so prevalent. Abdullahi Smith has set a standard; even though he avoids tackling the obvious question of what actually is the origin of this dynasty that came to be called after Saif Ibn Dhi Yazan; if in fact there was a single dynasty at all? That they would be regarded by the Kanem-

Borno scholars as the heirs (cultural) of Saif he has effectively demonstrated; but were they not just a powerful section of the Maghumi?

Like, on this issue, this publication leaves many questions unanswered. It is however hoped that it will stimulate interest by teachers in schools, colleges and universities in Borno, the rest of Nigeria, Africa, and other parts of the world. Among researchers, the information and analyses, and the shortcomings, should suggest lines of future research. Among the general public it should generate greater interest with this turbulent and rich historical experience of the people of Borno and their neighbours.

The publication of this book has been made possible by a grant from the Borno State Government and the cooperation of the Northern Nigeria Publishing Company Limited, who undertook to publish, it under a subsidy. The editors are grateful to the staff of the company and the Borno State Government for making it possible. We are also grateful for the typing to the secretarial staff of the University of Maiduguri and Martin Obayemi of the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The map "Borno and its neighbours" is adapted from the Ph.D thesis of Kyari Tijjani, *The Dynamics Of Administrative Change In Pre-Colonial Borno*, Ph.D, A.B.U. 1980. We are grateful to him for the permission and to Ado Jos for the adaptation.

Yusufu Bala Usman and Muhammad Nur Alkali
Zaria, Saturday 9th October 1982.

SECTION A.
PRE-HISTORY AND EARLY HISTORY.

CHAPTER I

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGY TO THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF BORNO.

by
Graham Connah

Beginning in 1857, when the German traveller and geographer, Dr. Heinrich Barth, recorded the observation concerning the artificial mound at Ndufu that 'sundry remarkable ornaments are said to be dug up frequently in that place' by the local people, (Barth, 1857:); archaeological notices on the environs of Lake Chad have accumulated. In the pioneer tradition, rank the works of individuals like Colonel L'enfant who carried out excavations at Ndufu (L'enfant : 1905 : 171); and Patterson, Lethem, and Noel (Noel, 1917 : 351-8). The earlier efforts culminated in the account by Gaden and Vernean in 1920, titled *Stations et sepultures neolithiques du territoire militaire due Tchad*, which was the most comprehensive study of the prehistory of the then French territory of Chad, embodying the collections from excavated artifacts, surface collections and human skeletons, made during the earlier colonial phase.

In 1928, Frederick Wulsin led An Archaeological Reconnaissance of the Shari Basin. His mission to Chad was then an exception not only in the fact that it was the only American archaeological expedition to West Africa during the colonial phase, but because he published what is patently the first complete, and scientific report of a systematic archaeological excavation in West Africa and not in a few pages of a journal but in a separate volume. (Wulsin : 1932). Two publications by Pales, in 1937, overlap the beginning of the work of a man whose name has since been associated with almost all archaeological effort in Chad and North Cameroun, namely that of Jean-Paul Lebeuf. By 1950, when *La Civilisation du Tchad* was published, a total of 72 archaeological sites had been prospected

between Griaule, Anne Masson-Detourbet (Later Anne Lebeuf) and himself (Lebeuf & Masson-Detourbet, 1950 : 180-182). Today, more than 1,500 archaeological sites have been recorded in the Chad-North Cameroun area alone. On the Nigerian side, apart from the expedition of Bivar and Shinnie, which had as its object the quest for old Kanuri capitals, archaeological work has centred first on the explorations and then on the excavations by this writer beginning effectively in 1965. (Connah, 1966 : 11-21, 1967 : 20-31).

Thus the contributions of archaeology to the knowledge of the history of Borno are to be sought in the analyses of the researches of many workers in the field, some of which have been indicated above. The publications vary. Some are field observations; some are descriptions of surface collections, while many are excavation reports (at various stages of production); some deal with limited and defined goals — like those on chronology — but all are relevant. The variety of the publications is explained in part by the fact that today, the lands bordering Lake Chad, and the lake itself, is divided between four states — Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroun—which, with the exit of Germany after 1918, have operated with reference to the institutions of the French and the British. The traditions of archaeological research of the French differ in many respects from that of the British, and the research orientations and techniques have produced archaeological accounts on all sides of Lake Chad, which may be very difficult to correlate. Even if archaeological work in the environs of Lake Chad reflect the territorial demarcations of the twentieth century, we are aware that pre-colonial man, and more especially prehistoric man cannot be expected to be a respecter of the later frontiers. As such we are equally interested in the effort on all sides of the lake, as indeed known history illustrates an aspect of the unity of the region.

In Africa, there has been an embarrassing inadequacy of communication between the archaeologist and the historian. This tendency has inspired statement from both sides. This is not the place to cite the reasons or the

arguments, but in discussing the contributions of archaeology to the knowledge of the history of one particular area we must clarify one or two points. One Nigerian historian, after evaluating the studies of some archaeologists who have worked in Nigeria despaired that :

‘With such confusion, caused by excessive reliance on speculative thought and guess-work, characteristic of the interpretation of archaeological materials in Nigeria, we have come to the stage when the possible relationship between Nigerian history and prehistory should be re-examined critically. On the basis of its present performance, it does not appear that Nigerian archaeology can provide a more acceptable chronology than the relative chronology which the more reliable oral traditions provide.

.....As for the social milieu in which the technology and economy emerged, and against which alone they are really meaningful the contribution of archaeology is virtually nil.’ (Osoba, 1969 :11).

The extreme position which this passage illustrates can only thrive in an atmosphere in which the nature and interpretation of archaeological data are not properly appreciated. Archaeological reconstructions are conditioned by the nature of the documents that survive for the archaeologist to study. Thus archaeology is the way in which the actions of human beings may be understood through the study of what human beings did, rather than simply through what they said of themselves. The picture offered by an eminent archaeologist in Africa restates the situation :

‘Because of the undue attention that archaeologists give to the objects they study and to the methods they employ, they have often been regarded as antiquarians or scientists rather than as historians or anthropologists. Confusion has also arisen due to the multiplicity of branches that our subject (archaeology) is divided into, such as prehistory and proto-history, but these are only terms used to denote the

state of our knowledge..... It would perhaps be honest to us, though cumbersome, if we called ourselves archaeological historians in contrast to the documentary historians who have been imperialistic in retaining the ascription history for their own tiny slice of the study of man's past. (Posnansky, 1969: 5 — 6).

The contributions of the archaeological historian even to the periods during which there are written records can be vital — examples have been demonstrated in numerous instances in the Holy Land, Ethiopia or the 'Zanj' coast. For Borno and the adjacent lands, the archaeologist has indeed thrown light on the 'historical period' as the limited work on Birnin Gazargarmo indicates (Connah, 1971 : 55 — 60). But it is precisely with the prehistoric and protohistoric periods — the times before clear historical information commence — that archaeology has been of most positive importance.

Archaeology and allied disciplines like geology, palaeogeography, and palynology, for example, have led to important discoveries about the human record and its milieu during the Pleistocene in Africa. One of the triumphs of these studies is the staggering extension of the history of man on the African continent to the period 2 or 3 million years ago. One vital discovery so far is that of the fragment of the skull of an early form of man some 200km W.S.W. of Largeau (Chad) in 1961. This creature is now thought to be a type intermediate between the *Australopithecus* and *Homo Erectus* types and to have lived some 1 million years ago. (Coppens; 1961 : 756 — 7 and Clark, 1969:). The discovery points to the importance of the Chad Basin in the history of man in Africa, and although, the earliest cultures like the Acheulian are not unknown in the Chad Basin, they are fairly remote for the phases for which we shall concern ourselves for the rest of this paper, namely the period beginning with the last few millenia B.C. onwards.

It is perhaps not possible, and certainly not easy to outline the history of man in the Chad area without a sketch of the landscape and of its evolution because such a sketch gives the setting of the stage, and also reveals the

conditions of the environment for man. As an inland drainage area and because of its size, the Lake Chad is of central importance to any examination or assessment of the human record along its shores.

The Chad Basin, bounded by the Air, Hoggar, Tibesti, Ennedi, Marra, Adamawa, Mandara highlands and the Jos Plateau covers an area of about two million square kilometres. The area of open water which has occupied parts of this basin has varied with the modifications of climate during the Pleistocene, and the evidence for the ancient transgressions are preserved in various forms within the basin, as recognisable shore-lines or of deposits by the wind during phases which were more diverse than at present. The present surface of the Lake Chad waters stands at some 282 metres above-sea-level and, the Basin is known to have been relatively stable since Pliocene times. Early Pleistocene high water-levels of 380-400 metres and of 320 metres are apparent but we lack absolute dates for these Mega-Chads. For the late Quarternary, the absolute chronology for the succession of conditions "wetter" and "drier" than at present are available. There was a wet phase from c. 41,000 to about 22,000 B.P. or earlier. During the succeeding dry phase desert conditions apparently prevailed as far south as the latitude of Kano in Hausaland, and the "Great Erg" of Hausaland, with its extensions into the shore-lines of a shrunken Lake Chad, where they persist as drowned dunes, were products of the dry phase which must have been intense about c. 20,000 B.P. (18,000 B.C.); and later a wetter phase spanned the period from c. 12,000 to c. 6,500 B.P. While Holocene lakes have been practically permanent near the 13th and 14th parallels since 1,000 to 2,500 years B.P., there has been however two dry intervals around 6,000 years and after 3,500 years B.P. (Grove & Pullan: 1964, Grove, 1965, Burke et al. 1971, Ogosu, 1971).

The practical implications of these late Pleistocene and Holocene fluctuations in the extent of Lake Chad for man are clear. By modifying the local climate the presence of an inland mass of water of the size of the Mega-Chads would have contributed to the feasibility of the vegetations and

hence of man especially in what is today a desert. The prehistoric record of Aterian type in the Hoggar, reflect a mediterranean flora with distinctive tropical forms. According to Quezel and Martinez, oak and cedar forests were growing in the Tibesti about 20,000 years ago, but had retreated during the dry phase which continued towards 12,000 B.P. Again during the 'Neolithic', sahelian flora was dominant (Quezel & Martinez 1958, 1962). Furthermore, in terms of what area was available for human settlement the fluctuations in the Lake shoreline must have had a decisive influence. Thus, human settlement on the *firki*, (the clay plains to the west, south and east of the present lake) could not have been settled during the periods of expansion of the lake. There could therefore not have been any unbroken continuity in the record of human settlements of the *firki* that extend further into the past than 3,500 year ago when the last wet phase conditions ameliorated. It is therefore from the period beginning in the second millenium B.C. that we can expect a continuous record of human occupation of parts of Borno and in general of the lands bordering on Lake Chad.

The prehistory and protohistory of the Chad area have their strong antecedents enacted in what is today the Sahara and the Sahel regions. Evidence in form of *in-situ* archaeological deposits, rock engravings and paintings offer a fairly comprehensive picture which we can summarise in a few sentences here. The rock engravings dominant in the Tibesti and Borkou are to be linked with those in the Djado, or central and northern Sahara in general. The scenes, or contents, feature for the most part, hunting scenes and marked figures. These are bracketed within the period 5,000 and 2,000 B.C. The latter period, that of a pastoral people depict among other things, cattle. Surface evidence for the Saharan neolithic are concentrated in the valleys, especially in the lower reaches of dry valleys such as those of the Bahr el-Ghazal. Excavations and studies of the Saharan neolithic has strengthened the recognition of the three neolithic traditions, namely those of Sudanic tradition, of Capsian tradition and of the mediterranean. That of Sudanic tradition appears on the basis of Carbon-14 dates, to go back as

early as the sixth millenium B.C. (Willett, 1971, 343-355). Impressed pottery, hearths, bones of cattle, including the cattle species, the *Bos brachyceros*, apparently domesticated from the Tassili are characteristic of the Saharan neolithic of Sudanic tradition.

Given the absence of any effective barrier between the Sahara and Sudan, it is easy to realise how Sahara cultural influences and actual populations could have moved south and the increasing dessication could have been one prompting factor. Local cultural adaptations reflecting the type of raw material available on the one hand, and the local subsistence resources on the other, are demonstrable in human historical experience — and this scheme is a cardinal basis for explaining the technological divergences following the standardised Acheulian tool-types in Africa. It is not surprising therefore that the tool-kit of the earliest settlers on the Chadian *firki* whether collected in 1906 (Gaden & Verneau, 1920: 512-16) or excavated in the sixties include the implements typical of the Saharan neolithic namely, polished stone axes and others which reflect the lacustrine environment namely plain bone points and bone harpoons. Also reflecting local pre-occupations are clay figurines of animals.

Although this is a study of the contributions of archaeology to the study of the history of Borno, we must digress to discuss what would otherwise not be an archaeological problems but rather a problem of interpretations. This is necessary because it affects in a direct way our readings of the *firki*. In terms of actual volume and the variety of publications the works of J. P. Lebeuf should weigh more heavily in our assessments. It is regrettable however that the form of presentation and the repeated criteria for classifying the sites do not permit as direct comparison with the results presented by the works of this writer on other side as desirable. The rigid classification of sites into Sao I, Sao II and Sao III which has been maintained in face of many types of other more imposing suggestions, of which carbon 14 dates are the most recent, can with justification be regarded as a "fossilised" schema. It is all the more an obstacle because it precludes the individual chronologies

for each site which is far more instructive in archaeology than classifications. The other obstacle in using the information accumulated by Lebeuf is the 'fixing' of a chronology for the So or Sao people, as if such a people did exist in fact as the traditions present them. The position which Lebeuf has assumed has not even been modified by such a contribution on the subject as Cohen's brief review, *The Just-So So? A Spurious tribal Grouping in Western Sudanic History* (Cohen, 1962, 153 — 4). The chronological basis for Lebeuf periodisation is narrow in the extreme, and does not recognise the contradictions inherent in such a position. The Sao are not one people, they could not therefore, even as a congere of peoples have moved into the Shari-Logone basin decisively in the ninth century A.D., which the opt repeated 'provisional' scheme of Lebeuf admits. It is with compulsory reluctance therefore that we turn to the more recent but more systematically presented data we recovered on the inviting question of the peopling and early culture history of the clay plains area of Chad.

To return to the end of the 3,000 — 1,500 wet phase. Excavations at a number of sites namely Yau, Kursakata, 'Borno 38', 'Borno 70', and Daima, as well as careful observations of surface collections have made possible comparisons whose tentative results, helped by Carbon-14 dates provide a basis for the chronology and description of the cultural evolution on the *firki*.

The lower levels of the Daima mound which span the last six centuries or so B.C., stone implements (polished stone axes, grooved stones, rubbers), bone implements (harpoons, points, etc) and clay figurines of animals, represent the non-perishable material — pottery apart. The Carbon-14 dates of 570+ — 95 B.C. as well as the relationship of these with later dates and archaeological data, reliably locates the early culture represented at Daima within the first millenium B.C. Similarities of the bone points, fragments of harpoons, pottery, clay animal figures and of polished stone axes at 'Borno 70' which produced dates of 730 + — 180 B.C. and 770+ — 120 B.C. and those from 'Borno 38' (no bone harpoons or animals figurines) but which

gave the dates of 1880+ — 250 B.C., 1010+ — 160 B.C., 930+ — 140 B.C. and 640+ — 170 B.C. all strengthen the suggestion that the *firki* was being settled by human groups during the first millenium B.C. and probably during the second millenium B.C. as well. (Connah, 1968: 313 — 320; Willet, 1971: 354 — 5). The lower levels of the 5.87m Kursakata mound yielded animal figurines and pottery which showed some resemblance to the earlier ones from Daima — the carbon 14 dates of 930+ — 140 B.C. would seem to confirm the early occupation of the *firki* early in the first millenium B.C. We must here cite the Carbon-14 dates of 425+ — 150 B.C. presented from Mdaga, of 30+ — 180 and 120 + — 180 both from Amkounjo by Lebeuf as these also extend the archaeological records of his 'Sao' sites into the first millenium B.C. The fact that these excavations, and the resultant Carbon-14 determination, permit a relative precision in dating the peopling of the *firki*, and in the recognition of characteristic items of the material culture is one area in which archaeology has made contributions to the study of the human past in the Chad area. In addition to this information, the conclusions of a 1920 study of remains of three individuals from the Lake Fitri area are relevant with regards to the ethnic affinities of neolithic populations of the central section of the Chad Basin. They had affinities with the negroid peoples of the eastern and western Sudan but particularly with present-day inhabitants of Chad. (Gaden & Verneau, 1920 : 538). That they were herders of cattle and possibly also of sheep is implied by the wealth of the earliest deposits in bones of these animals at the Daima mound.

The excavations at Daima shows a continuity in the human occupation of the mound which persisted until the second millenium A.D. The manufacture of clay figurines persisted. Traces of a mud wall exist in a context dated about A.D. 450, but evidence for circular mud huts improves in a context of late fifth century A.D. The latter half of the first millenium A.D. witnessed the construction of potsherd pavements of herring-bone pattern. Bronze was apparently being placed with burials. Within this phase occurs the

earliest definite evidence for the presence of iron. If indeed it was introduced in the sixth century A.D., the attention it had been given vis-a-vis the introduction of iron to the Sudan and especially the role which Daima is being given with regards to the much flogged issue of the direction of the introduction of iron, Meroitic or Carthaginian, is yet to be demonstrated to be a worthwhile exercise, and definitely a pre-mature one.

Another positive contribution of archaeology is again demonstrated by its documentation of a continuing culture and approximate times of cultural innovations.

The question of innovation assume a new dimension with the tentative deduction that the post ninth/tenth centuries A.D. saw a final iron-age population with more extensive trade, and hence cultural contacts (Connah, 1969 : 119). The additions to, and the increasing diversification of the cultural inventory came to include a number of distinctive fire-places with vertical sides; thick sherds of large pots; the clay figurine art came to admit the presentation of anthropomorphic forms; burials contained bronze discs and bracelets; white stone lip plugs; glass-beads; ostrich eggshell beads; carnelian and other objects. (Connah, 1969 : 120).

To this inventory are to be added the vast quantity of artefacts recovered in archaeological excavations, by Lebeuf and his associates. Even if it is a bit risky to equate the contents of Lebeuf's material with any one particular stage in the phase identifiable on my tentative work, the sheer wealth of the former's presentation, the diversity as well as the aesthetic appeal of the material is an impressive documentation for the elements of a veritable Chadian civilisation. The clay spindle whorls, 'bolas', 'monnaies', pots (with lids and stoppers), figurines of animals, man and anthropomorphic beings, bronze bracelets and pendants convey even in diagramatic form the prestige of 'Une veritable civilisation du Tchad' (Lebeuf & Masson Detourbet : 1950, Lebeuf, 1962); while the tabulation of Carbon-14 dates (Lebeuf, 1969 : 240) shows the overlap with the results from my excavations.

We cannot tell to what extent the cultural innovations were the products of immigration. This is one of the difficulties with archaeological data; the question of migrations on small or large scale is not always easily deduced except for evidence of violence, or abrupt discontinuity in the cultural record. Innovations need not be accompanied by large-scale, or even any immigrations. Thus, the specific identification of cultural innovations, as that of increased trade contacts during the latter part of the first millenium A.D. provisional explanations of Carbon-14 dates, for the Yau mound, suggest that its formation belongs essentially to the second millenium A.D. But as to whether it was a product of Kanuri or non-Kanuri, throughout its sequence, is beyond the scope of archaeology. Even if the Kanuri took over the basic features of the material culture of earlier peoples, as the non-perishable remains suggest, extra-archaeological data is still needed to substantiate such a suggestion.

Of the historical period, it has always been recognised that there are areas of obscurity. Where, for example, is the Njimi or Sima of the texts? One known site which was apparently occupied between the abandonment of Njimi and the establishment at Birnin Gazargamo, featuring surrounding walls and baked brick construction, that of Garoumele (Niger) has been described. But neither this site nor others which have been described — Gambaru, Tie among others as well as the eight others located and described by Lavers (Lavers, 1971 : 39—57)—have been systematically prospected by field survey and excavation. Speculations about potentials of such sites can be endless but at Birnin Gazargamo which has attracted the attention of many 'Bornuologists' — Palmer, Migeod, Cohen, Bivar and Shinnie, myself and Lavers, the excavation I did of a 3.40m. deep mound in the area of the palace of the *Mais* has yielded a Carbon-14 date of A.D. 1629 + -105 (Connah, 1971 : 56) from its middle portion. The mound itself appears to be made up of household refuse from the palace area. The known history of Birni Gazargamo, and of Borno

in general, makes this Carbon-14 date little more than a confirmation of what is already known, that the site was already in occupation in the seventeenth century.

Much of the historian's frustration with the archaeologist's work derives in part from the different nature of the archaeologist's results and the very slow process of getting out even this usually provisional result. Thus far, however, for the period of known history — the period spanned by the dynastic chronology of the Kanem-Borno Seifuwa — the archaeologist's contribution is dwarfed into near insignificance. While such needs not to have been the case, if Lebeuf's efforts have been more effectively historically oriented for example, and while very little has been done, the potentials of archaeology and her allied disciplines have made available a chronology and a succession of events for the period of time spanned by prehistory (and protohistory) which hitherto had been a *terra incognita* to the historian.

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THE LEGEND OF THE SEIFUWA : A STUDY IN THE ORIGINS OF A TRADITION OF ORIGIN.

by
Abdullahi Smith

We are all familiar with that part of Nigerian folk literature which deals with the foundation of the great ruling dynasties of the past. We all know the stories which are told of the heroes who came from afar to settle in this land and become its rulers, and whose descendants continued as the dynasts of Hausaland, Borno, and Yorubaland, particularly, for perhaps as much as a thousand years. Folklore gives great prominence to these heroes, for it is claimed that their activity ushered in a new age of political, and more generally, cultural developments: the age of nations and states. The traditions which are preserved of these figures are rich and detailed, for it is claimed that they not only found governments, but because of the great *cultural* impact which they had, they, in a sense, founded *peoples* also: peoples whose distinguishing cultural traditions derive from them. Some versions of the story of Oduduwa, for example, express this in extreme dramatic terms by saying that Oduduwa (besides being the ancestor of the Yoruba dynasts) actually created mankind. In a somewhat less dramatic form, another version, on the basis of the story of Oduduwa's flight from Arabia, suggests that Yoruba culture is a Middle Eastern origin.

In recent years these stories have engaged the attention of students trained in the Western traditions of learning, and a considerable literature, part of contemporary African Studies, has developed about them.¹ Ostensibly this literature attempts to analyse these traditions with a view to establishing their significance in the intellectual heritage of the peoples of Africa. But it must be confessed that such efforts have not as yet been rewarded with any notable success. *One central problem, which attempts at analysis of*

traditions of origin (as these stories are collectively called) continue to face, is that of the origin of the traditions themselves; the problem of describing the intellectual conditions which gave rise to these stories, and placing their origin in time. Another largely unsolved problem is that of establishing to what extent these stories refer to actual facts of history: the problem of separating what is literary romance, belonging to the artistic world of poetry and drama, from what are descriptions of actual events of the past. Perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses of the contemporary historiography of Africa lies in its almost complete neglect of the *intellectual* history of the peoples of the continent. Even if it should prove that these traditions are not concerned at all with the facts of political history, it nevertheless remains the case that the traditions themselves are facts of intellectual history and will always merit study as such. Until some progress is made in their scientific study we shall continue to lack understanding of the cultural heritage of which they are part and the intellectual basis of African culture will remain unknown to us.

It is for these reasons, as a contribution, albeit fragmentary and tentative, to the reconstruction of the intellectual history of the Nigeria peoples, that this essay in the interpretation of the traditions of origin of the Seifuwa of Kanem/Borno is offered. I first made bold to raise this question some ten years ago in a brief paper read to the Historical Society of Nigeria, and fragments of the paper (which was fortunately never published) will be found embedded here and there in the present essay. The reason for mentioning it here is that the search for material on which to base an interpretation of the story of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan and the Seifuwa has led me in the course of a decade into many fields of enquiry and to a realisation that certainly in this area of Nigerian intellectual history the source material to be used is not fragmentary and inadequate, as such material is often reckoned to be (and as I once thought), but voluminous and confusing, to the extent that the present writing is still ill-digested and unfinished² and is valuable, if at all rather for the multitude of questions it raises than for those it solves. It is offered now in the hope that it may point the

way to further studies by other students. It is also, indeed mainly, offered at this time as an already much belated work of respect, on the occasion of his retirement from active teaching, for Thomas Hodgkin, a one time External Examiner in History to Ahmadu Bello University and one of the few scholars from the West who has in recent times shown understanding of the intellectual traditions of Islamic Africa.

The story that I am considering is that which tells us that the dynasty of the Seifuwa, who ruled Kanem-Borno for the best part of a millenium ending in 1846 AD, is descended from the great Arab hero Sayf b. Dhi Yazan of Himyar who lived in the Yeman of Arabia at the time of the rise of Islam.³ This story is firmly believed among the *ulama* of Borno at the present time, and is the basis of a wider belief that the culture of the people whom we know as the Kanuri has been shaped over the centuries by the impact of generations of rulers of Arab origin. The Seifuwa occupy a position of prime importance among the past rulers of Africa. Not only did the period of their rule exceed that of any other dynasty anywhere in Africa during the last two millenia (with the possible exception of the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopia)⁴, but it is now generally accepted that the influence of these rulers extended in days gone by far beyond the homeland of the Kanuri, and affected the lives of a great variety of peoples of differing cultural traditions both Islamic and non-Islamic.⁵ Because the cultural destiny of so many peoples for such a long time has been linked with that of the Seifuwa, it is clearly important for us to understand the nature of the cultural traditions which these rulers themselves inherited. For all these reasons this story of the origin of the Seifuwa merits study. We need to know if in fact the Seifuwa *were* a vehicle by which the culture of the Arabs, and particularly that of ancient Himyar, spread among the peoples of central Africa.

Many questions immediately arise here. Perhaps the first one to be dealt with is: *were* these rulers actually of Himyarite origin? In recent times scholars of the West particularly have drawn attention to what they regard as the

widespread belief in "myths" which characterise the ideas of peoples about their origin. The suggestion is that when a group of people say that they are descended from this or that great figure of the distant past it is unwise to believe them, because they do not actually *know* the details of their remote ancestry, and, in the absence of this knowledge, are prone to *invent* a celebrated ancestor in order to justify their present claims to social distinction. This failing is believed to be particularly common among peoples not sufficiently sophisticated to preserve proper records of their ancestry, such as African peoples.⁶ Some peoples also, though sophisticated, are thought to be unscrupulous, and purposefully falsify their ancestry in order to deceive. Thus, Muslim people are said sometimes to claim that they are descended from the Prophet Muhammed, even though they know perfectly well that they are not.⁷

We do not, of course, have to follow the inductive methods of Western scholarship which have so often permitted false generalisations about human society on the basis of a few inadequately understood particulars. We do not need to agree with the late Sir Richmond Palmer when he attributes these traditions we are examining merely "to the old Borno court's desire for a Yemanite pedigree and an imaginary sojourn of their ancestors in Arabia", and holds that "they may therefore be dismissed as fabrications."⁸ But it is certainly our business to test the reliability of traditions of origin by all reasonable means. One such is to attempt to establish the antiquity of the tradition itself. The antiquity of many Nigerian traditions of origin is quite unknown in the present state of our historical knowledge. This certainly raises the *possibility* that they are of recent invention and thus unlikely to be true.⁹ In this they may resemble some of the more recent hypotheses of historians. But, as it happens, the case of the tradition which we are considering is quite different. It is in fact unique among the Nigerian traditions of dynastic origin in this respect. For it is certain that as long ago as the second half of the 13th century A.D. people believed that the Seifuwa were descended from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. The Arab ancestry of the Seifuwa may even

al-Bakri, writing in the middle of the 11th century, "some assert that there is a people descending from the Banu Umayya who went to that country [Kanem] during their persecution by the Abbasids".¹⁰ It is just possible that the Banu Umayya referred to here were in fact the Banu Humay, the clan of the Magumi which began to rule in Kanem in the second half of the 11th century, if not earlier, and *could* have been Arabs driven out of the Yemen by the Abbasid governors established there in the early 9th Century AD.¹¹ But for the 13th century, precise authority for this is to be found in a passage of the *Surat al-rad* of Ibn Said al-Maghribi which speaks of "the ruler of Kanem, famous for jihad and other good works of an Islamic nature, a descendant of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan."¹² It is possibly significant that Ibn Said shows no scepticism on this point. He does not say that the ruler of Kanem merely *claims* to be descended from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan, but writes as though he were recording an undisputed fact. And later on Abu al-Fida (early 14th century) Al-Umari (mid 14th century) and Al-Maqrizi (early 15th century) repeat this information from Ibn Said.¹³ Further authoritative confirmation of the antiquity of this tradition comes from the end of the 14th century AD in the well-known letter of Mai Uthman b. Idris to the Sultan Barquq of Egypt, which says that the rulers of Borno are "the sons of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan, father of our tribe, the Arab of Quraysh, as our learned men have told us".¹⁴ Again, the position taken by the Mai is entirely reasonable: he is not making any doubtful claim to a distinguished ancestry, but merely recording what the *ulama* say.

Our tradition is therefore of great antiquity, and, to that extent, is worthy of respect. But its truth is not thereby proved, for the 13th century, when we first hear of it, is still six or seven hundred years away from the lifetime of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. Unfortunately, we know nothing at present about the transmission within Kanem/Borno of earlier information about the ancestry of the dynasty, as we have no means of establishing the antiquity or authorship of the

local histories in which the information is preserved. And we all know how difficult it is even for us, with all the facilities we have at our disposal, to be certain about things which happened seven hundred years before our own time. In our attempts to press this question further we must therefore ask what means the Kanuri *ulama* of the 13th century had at their disposal for solving historical problems of this nature: what authority can we concede to them in the matter of interpreting traditions referring to events of the ancient past? The answer which is offered here is that the tradition in question was undoubtedly in consonance with general ideas about the history of the world which prevailed in their day, and moreover accorded extremely well with an established body of known facts about the African past.

Fortunately, we do know something about the general world of scholarship in which our scholars of the 13th century A.D lived, and the tradition of historical study to which they were heirs. To these scholars the source of all learning lay in the literature of classical Arabic. Their interest in this was not only required by their religion, but could readily be indulged in because of the close cultural connections which actually existed between Kanem and the Arabic-speaking Islamic world of North Africa and the Middle East. In Kanem the performance of the pilgrimage, for example, appears, even in those early times, to have had a greater importance than in any other part of the Sudan. The route by which pilgrims then went to the holy cities lay through Egypt which, from the 13th century A.D. onwards, was emerging as the greatest international centre of learning in the whole of the Islamic world. And the *ulama* of Kanem had certainly established their reputation among the scholars who frequented Cairo in those days. In about 1240 A.D. Kanembu scholars founded their own *madrasa* in al-Fustat, for the study of the Maliki law and for the accommodation of visitors to Cairo from their country.¹⁵ Such development permit us to suppose that the learned men of Kanem in those days derived their academic traditions from the world of Sunni learning in a way perhaps not entirely dissimilar

from that in which African scholars of the present day often tend to derive their traditions of learning from the universities of the Western world.

Now, the traditions of Islamic learning thus inherited by the Kanuri *ulama*, attached great importance to historical enquiry and particularly to the study of the origins of families and peoples. The authority for this preoccupation was Qur'an XLIX.13.¹⁶ It was clearly the business of scholars to investigate the origins of the peoples and ruling dynasties of the world; and by the 13th century A.D. a great volume of the results of such investigation had already been incorporated in the works of the leading Muslim historians. It is important to understand the scope of this early Islamic historiography. A common misconception among Western writers of course is that it confined itself largely to the history of the Arabs in the Islamic era. But in fact their interest in the origin of peoples took the Muslim scholars back far beyond the lifetime of the Prophet, and beyond the confines of the Arab world: as far back, as far abroad, indeed, as the source material at their disposal could take them. In this, the range of their studies far exceeded that of contemporary writers of the non-muslim world. And in this studies the history of the rulers of Kanem had a perfectly legitimate place.

Their field of study was limited only by the source material at their disposal. This source material consisted of the body of traditions already accumulated over the centuries in the Middle Eastern lands, traditions which dealt with the peopling of this region, and the rise of civilisation there and its diffusion to other parts of the world. This body of traditions represented the view of the past unanimously accepted in the Judaic-Christian-Islamic world, and there is little doubt that this view was well-known to the Kanuri *ulama* of the 13th century A.D.

In our enquiry it is important to understand this historical outlook and the sources on which it was based. First the sources. Of course, the one source of information about the early history of mankind in which our historians had complete faith was the Qur'an, on which their whole system of

belief was based. But the Qur'an, though containing historical material, is not really a history book. The oldest, largest and most detailed collection of traditions about the early history of mankind available to our scholars was to be found in the books of the Tawrah (the Old Testament) which dealt with the history of man from the beginning. Of course it was the case that the logic of their own faith required the Muslim historians to regard this material critically, for basic among their convictions was the belief that the commandments of God communicated to the early Prophets had been recorded by the Jews in a distorted and incomplete fashion. But the extent of their distortion of ancient history *as a whole* (as distinct from certain specified matters) could not be accurately inferred from the Qur'an. In view of this, the early Muslim historians followed a number of procedures in dealing with the stories of the Pentateuch. With regard to individuals and events of ancient times which were treated in detail in the Qur'an, and of which *differring* accounts appeared in the Tawrah, it was obviously necessary to base historical writing on the Qur'anic accounts. But with regard to individuals and events which are only mentioned in passing in the Qur'an, it was reasonable to search for further details in the Tawrah, and use them in historical writing, so long as this did not give rise to any contradiction with the text of the Qur'an. And with regard to matters not mentioned in the Qur'an at all, it was again permissible to use the accounts of the Tawrah for historiographical purposes, so long as their use did not give rise to the same difficulty. Even in the case of the prophetic tradition which was a central consideration in the study of history, God had said (Qur'an, XL.78) that some of the earlier prophets are not mentioned in the Qur'an, and it was therefore reasonable to search for information about these in other sources, so long as this was not expressly forbidden. Thus we find that early historians, such as Ibn Qutayba (d.889 A.D.) and al-Ya'qubi (late 9th century A.D.), made considerable use of material taken directly from the Tawrah, and it also became usual for them to embody in their writings variant versions of Biblical stories or clearly non-Biblical accounts of figures mentioned in the Old Testament.¹⁷

only source of historical material beside the Qur'an which were available to the early Muslim historians, there existed, in addition, what is likely to have been a very large body indeed of oral tradition widely preserved in the folklore of the peoples of Semitic speech. Thus the early historians drew widely on the orally preserved traditions of the ancient Arabs. In addition again they made use of materials available to them from non-Semitic sources, such as the histories of the Iranian peoples like the Pahlevi epic, of the *Khudhaynama*, and so on. Finally they had at their disposal the extra-Qur'anic traditions concerning the Middle East in the lifetime of the Prophet which are to be found in the collections of the *hadith* and the *sira* and *maghazi* forms of Arabic literature of the 2nd century A.H.¹⁸

Now the historical literature¹⁹ which was based on the sources briefly described here, embodied a particular set of ideas concerning the nature of human history: ideas which later Muslim historians would naturally apply to the investigation of areas of the history of the Islamic world which did not happen to be recorded in the early writings. This essay is not intended to discuss this Islamic "philosophy of history" in detail. But, because the argument proposed here is that the Kanemi *ulama* of the 13th century A.D. are likely to have applied it in attempting to establish the origin of their rulers, it is necessary to consider some of the ideas involved in it.

One such basic idea is that of the cataclysmic significance in human history, of the Great Flood, and the associated idea that the ethnic grouping of humanity known in historical times is the result of the re-peopling of the world after the Flood. The story of the Flood is given in the Tawrah (Genesis 6 — 8), and again in Qur'an XI. 36 — 48. It also occurs in the cuneiform writings of ancient Iraq, Anatolia and Palestine. Evidence of widespread flooding in the Tigris-Euphrates valley has been recorded from archeological excavations in southern Iraq, and dated to a time before the beginning of the 3rd millenium BC. There is no doubt that there *was* a Flood, and even Western historiography conce-

ded that what we call "civilisation" developed after it. Western writers have long speculated on the connection between the "drying out" of the present Arabian and Saharan deserts and the rise of civilisation in Egypt.²⁰ In the Judaic-Christian-Islamic tradition it is associated with the prophet Nuh (Noah), and the re-peopling of the world after the subsidence of the Flood is attributed to the descendants of Noah. In the words of al-Yaqubi, for example:

"... Noah divided the land among his sons.

He gave to Shem (Sham) the centre of the earth, and the holy sanctuary and its surroundings, and the Yemen, and the Hadaramawt as far as Oman, as far as Bahrayn, and as far as Alaji, and Yabrin, and Bar, and al-Daww and al-Dahna. And to Ham the lands of the West and the coasts [of East Africa] ...And Japhet (Yafith), son of Noah, settled between the east and the west".²¹

It was from these three sons of Noah that the peoples of the world known to the early Muslim historians were believed to be descended. Thus the descendants of Japhet eventually formed the peoples known as the Greeks and the Romans, the Slavs, the Turks, the Persians, the Chinese etc. The "sons of Shem" became the Hebrews and the Arabs. The progeny of Ham were the ancient Egyptians, the Berbers the Ethiopians, the black peoples of Africa and southern India, etc. Eventually the third group of peoples occupied all the "land of the west from beyond the Euphrates to the place where the sun sets".

This idea of the historical importance of the aftermath of the Great Flood was associated with another idea namely: the conception of peoples as descent groups. This latter idea found its justification for the early Muslim historians in Qur'an XXV.54.²² But it is of course an idea of great antiquity. A cursory glance at the Old Testament will indicate the great importance attached by the ancient Hebrews to genealogy.²³ And in modern times the importance in society of the lineage, with its siblings and affines and so on, is well known to pre-occupy our colleagues, the social anthropologists. Among the scholars of early Islamic times the

ilm-ansab. The notion developed into a separate science that the culture and the historical role of a people were somehow determined by their ancestry. In Arabic the word *asl* means both "origin" and "principle". A clear exposition of this idea in the 14th century A.D. is to be seen in the following passage from the *Muqaddama* of Ibn Khaldun:

"When genealogists noted differences between these nations, their distinguishing marks and characteristics, they considered them to be due to their (different) descents. They declared all the black inhabitants of the south to be descendant of Ham. ... The declared all or most of the temperate nations who inhabit the central regions, who cultivate the sciences and crafts, and who possess religious groups and religious laws as well as political leadership and royal authority, to be descendants of Sham".²⁴

In this way on the basis of the story of the Flood and the survival of the family of Noah, there was eventually erected vast and complicated super-structure of genealogical material intended to elucidate the history of different peoples.²⁵ The detail of this genealogical structure of the nations which the *ulama al-ansab* attempted to work out produced many controversies, and these added further zest to the investigations of antiquaries eager to establish just where in the great network of the kinship of mankind their particular group fitted.

Now there is ample reasons to believe that the Kanuri *ulama* of days gone by entered fully into the spirit of this type of enquiry, and that it was in the light of the ideas described here that they sought for the history of their rulers. We shall search in vain for any other basis to their thought on this subject. And indeed the traditions of the *ulama al-ansab* continue to survive among them at the present time. The idea of the universal history, tracing the descent of historical man from the sons of Noah is still cherished in Borno and members of the Kanuri ruling class continue to attach great importance to the preservation of their genealogies.²⁶

The question now to be asked is: where in the genealogical tree of mankind did the Kanuri *ulama* believe that the Seifuwa fitted? That they were descended from the sons of Ham might be suggested on grounds of language (their native tongue was neither Arabic nor Hebrew); and physical appearance (they were dark-skinned) for as we point out below, it was a common belief among the early genealogists that the negro peoples were call sons of Ham. But this suggestion would not square with other accepted principles on which genealogical enquiry was based. To begin with, the Seifuwa did not appear to be natives of the region of Kanem. In their language the word Kanem meant "the south", implying that the ancient homeland of the Seifuwa lay away to the north outside the "negro south" of the genealogists, and this was confirmed by the well established traditions of their early association with the nomads of the central Sahara. Again it was well known that one of the early Mais had been sur-named *Tselem* (the black) presumably because he looked different from his fair-skinned predecessors. Moreover, the role which the Seifuwa had in fact played in history was quited different from that assigned to the sons of Ham by genealogists. The story of the "Curse of Noah" given in the Tawrāh was widely accepted by the early historians.²⁷ This condemned the sons of Ham to perpetual servitude to the other branches of the humanity. But this had certainly not been the historical experience of the Seifuwa. Rather it had been *other* peoples who had habitually been their slaves. The Seifuwa, indeed, quite clearly belonged to the sort of people who the genealogists regarded as the sons of Shem. In a world of learning where the culture of a people was thought to be determined by their descent no other conclusion was possible.

But the descendants of Shem were very numerous and more detailed study was required to place the Seifuwa firmly in their correct historical position. The *awlad Sham* with whom genealogists mainly concerned themselves in Africa were the Arabs, Berbers and Jews. There was no sign of any belief that the Seifuwa were descended from African Jews as the latter had no traditions of conversion to Islam. This left the Arabs and the Berbers.

to us in this matter because it appears to be the case that in early times Arabic-speaking people who knew of the Kanuri regarded them as Berbers. Thus Ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi speaks of "the people of Kanem and their followers from among the Barābar". The word "al-Barbar" indeed appears to have been used in Arabic as a name for those peoples of the west whose languages were not intelligible to the Arabs, but who nevertheless were accepted as belonging to the Islamic world. Thus it did not refer to the Ethiopians (al-Habasha), the Zinj (of east Africa) or other non-Muslim negroes (al-Sudan). But though mainly applied to the non-Arabic-speaking peoples of North Africa and the Sahara,²⁸ it was not used of them alone and was sometimes applied to Muslim Sudan. Thus it was applied (in the form "al-Barabira") to the inhabitants of this born of Africa between Zeila and Mogadishu. This usage long pre-dated the rise of Islam, being mentioned in the works of the Greek geographers.²⁹ It also remained current in Nigeria as late as the beginning of the 19th century when the caliph Muhammad Bello wrote of "the Berbers (*al-Barabira*) who lived between the Zinj and the Ethiopians", and who, according to him, eventually migrated to form part of the population of Borno.³⁰ The Hausa word for "Kanuri" is *Ba-barbare* (plural: *Barebari*), and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this derives from the Arabic usage also (*Barbari*; plural, *Barabira*.)

At first sight then the Seifuwa as the ruling class of the Kanuri might appear to be Berbers. But this was not certain because they could equally have been "berberised" Arabs (*arab must ajamun* as Muhammad Bello puts it); Arabs who though long association with Berbers, had come to adopt their language. And in any case the question of the relation between Berbers and Arabs was a complicated and controversial one. Very usefully Ibn Khaldun provides us with a summary of the beliefs current on this subject in the 14th century AD.³¹ According to him some genealogists regarded the Berbers as descendants of Yaksan son of Ibrāhim, of the line of Abir, descendant of Shem. Others regarded

them as descendants of al-Nu'man, son of Himyar, son of Sabā of the line of Qahtān son of Abir (i.e. descendants of Shem, of the branch from which the "South Arabs" claimed descent). A variation of this view regarded the Berbers as descendants of Arabs of Ghassan (i.e. "South Arabs" domiciled in Syria and Iraq). Others again considered them as descendants of Jaluth (Goliath), also to be of the line of Qahtān. All these theories regarded the Berbers as being originally of the same stock as the Arabs, and as having migrated from either Syria or the Yaman to settle in Africa. But another group of theories regarded them as descendants of Ham (i.e. non-Arab) through his son Canaan or through another of his sons, Mizraim.³² Finally a third group saw the Berbers as mainly of non-Arab stock except for two groups, the Kotama and the Sanhaja,³³ who were believed to be Himyar in origin.

These three differing views of the origin of the Berbers were all recorded in the works of the leading genealogists of the early Islamic era, and were, no doubt, well-known to the Kanuri *ulama*. But which elements in these differing stories would they accept as throwing light on the origin of their rulers? The widely differing versions of the genealogy of the Berbers must have created a great difficulty. But there was one way out, and this was the way our scholars appear to have taken. Differing though the recorded versions of the ancestry of the Berbers were, they all contained one common element. This was that, whatever their own origin may have been, the Berbers had undoubtedly come under the influence of the Arabs of Himyar in ancient times.

The story of this last development was widely recorded in the early histories, and concerns the activities of the Himyarite king, Ifriqish b. Abraba Dhu al-Manar. He is said to have led a great expedition into North Africa via Syria during which he came into contact with the Berbers. Ibn Khallikān gives the following summary of the beliefs of the genealogists concerning this incident:

"Ibn Khaldun in his universal history says:
To Abraha Dhu Al-Manar succeeded his son Ifriqush. Ibn al-Kalbi says that Ifriqush was the son

and that it was he who built, in the gharb (or Maghrib), the city named after him Ifriqiyya, to which city he sent the Berbers from the land of Canaan on his passing close by them when Joshua had defeated them in Syria and slain (a number of them). (Ifriqush) then took charge of the few (that remained) and marched them before him to Ifriqiyya where he settled them. It is said that Jirjis was king of that country: and that it was he (Ifriqush) who gave the the Berbers his name: for on conquering the Maghrib he heard their strange language and said: "How great is your gibberish (Berbera)! for which reason they are called Berbers ... When (Ifriqush) returned from his expedition to Maghrib he left there Sanha-ja and Kotoma (branches) of the tribe of Himyar, and these are still there, but are not of the same stock as the Berbers. Thus say al-Tabari, al-Jurjani, al-Mis'udi, Ibn al-Kalbi, al-Bayhaqi, and all the genealogists".³⁴

In fact there were several differing versions of this story, but in general it established the belief that the Himyarite Arabs had ancient authority over the Berbers, and that added plausibility to their view that the rulers of the Kanuri were of Himyarite origin.

The force of this belief must have been very considerable because of the very great general importance in the history of the pre-Islamic world which was attached to Himyar by the early Muslim historians. Al-Tabari who gives the most detailed account of the early kings of Himyar which I have seen, claims that there was a time when they dominated western Asia as far north as the Caucasus and the frontier of Persia. Their influence in Syria was attested by the generally accepted story of the homage of the Himyarite Queen Bilqis to the prophet Sulayman b. Dawud. They are said to have conquered India and invaded China. In the words of Al-Tabari: "All the kings of the earth feared the Tubba".

And in Africa the belief in their ancient influence did not rest merely on the doubtful inference which would be

drawn from the story of one military expedition into the North African coastlands. Al-Tabari (who incidentally does not mention Ifriqish at all) has this to say:

“Then [in the time of the Persian king Manuchihr] there was in the Yaman a king from among the sons of Yaʿrub b. Qahtān who was called al-Rāʾish, but his real name was Hārith b. Abi Shaddād. He was called al-Rāʾish because he brought much booty to his kingdom. This prince made war, defeated his enemies, and was a great king. None of the kings of the Yaman was as great as he, and none had more extensive dominions.....

After al-Raʾish his son named Abraha ascended the throne. He was a great king: his army was very large and his empire vast. This prince was called Dhu Al-Manar because he led his army into the Maghrib, into a dark country, and fearing that they might lose their way in the darkness on their return, he set up beacons within sight of each other to enable him to find his way out of that country.....

After Dhu al-Manar, his son named Abd b. Dhi al-Manar, mounted the throne. Abd was surnamed Dhu al -Adhs ar because in the lifetime of his father he led an army into the Māghrib and reached a distant place where no one had previously penetrated. He took many prisoners and returned to his father in the Yaman..... When his father died Dhu al-Adhs ar came to the throne, and his empire became extremely powerful..... After the death of Bilqis, a man of the Arabs named Yasir b. ʿAmrum descended from the kings of Sabā, occupied the throne..... He was of Himyar, for all the kings of the Yaman were Himyarites. Then he went out from Sabā, and conquered the Yaman. Then he went off to the Maghrib until he reached the limits of the inhabited world. As he continued his journey the roads came to an end, and he entered the desert. He eventually came to a river of sand flowing like

his army to the Yaman where he died".³⁵

Here are, not one, but three expeditions of the Himyarites to "the west", and it is not at all clear that by "the west" al-Tabari is referring to the coastlands of North Africa.³⁶ Had he been referring to that region he would surely have mentioned the passage of these expeditions through Egypt (as he mentions the countries through which the kings of Yaman passed on their way to the conquest of Adharbayjān, for example). What seems most likely is that here we have a reference to expeditions of Himyar westward across the Red Sea into the east African deserts. For whatever doubt may be cast on Himyaritic influence in North Africa in ancient times, there is no doubt at all that such influence has existed in East Africa for a very long period. Himyar descended from Sabā, and the Sabaeans are well known to have conquered territory on the western coast of the Red Sea some time in the first millenium B.C. The Ethiopian monarchy of our own time still claims descent from them. Claudius reports that at the beginning of the Christian era the peoples living on the western coast of the Red Sea were under the domination of the 'Homarites.'³⁷ The traditions of the Somali tribes affirm that Arabs of Himyar settled among them before the rise of Islam.³⁸ Al-Mas'udi reports a tradition that the ancestors of the rulers of Maris and Maqurra^c in the Nile Valley were of Himyar. And all this accorded extremely well with the genealogical interpretation of history for these East African peoples were clearly the sons of Ham and their domination by the neighbouring Himyar, the greatest of the pre-Islamic sons of Shem, was the natural consequence of the curse of Noah.

It must be remembered also that, whatever their role in the west, Himyar, in the view of the historians, were traditionally the great rulers of "the south" for the word al-Yaman meant just that in the Islamic terminology in use in Africa. Nowadays we restrict the application of the word to the south-western corner of the Arabian peninsula. But as

late as the 19th century in Nigeria the word was still used to mean "the south" in a general sense including even the southernmost part of the Sokoto caliphate.³⁹ The genealogists insisted as we have seen, that the southern country, the dwelling place of the sons of Ham, must be ruled by the sons of Shem; for this, to them, was part of *nizam al-alam*, the order of the world. This required in turn that the Seifuwa, well established and unquestioned as rulers of part of the Sudanic south, should be a branch of the family of Shem and what could then be more reasonable than to believe that they were related to Himyar, the traditional Shemitic rulers of the south.

Indeed the Seifuwa were not the only ruling group in Bilad al-Sudan, even in what we call the western Sudan, who were believed to be descended from Himyar. The facts of Eastern African history may well be thought too remote to be of significance for the history of Borno. But we cannot similarly disregard what we know of the beliefs of closer neighbours of the Seifuwa. Thus it may be useful to consider in this connection the well-known story of the origin of the Za dynasty of Kukiya and Gao, rulers of the land known as Kawkaw to the early Islamic geographers. Al-Ya^cqūbi surprisingly has the following to say of this region: "Then there is the kingdom of Kawkaw, and this is the greatest of the kingdoms of the Sūdān, the greatest in extent and the paramount in authority. All the kingdoms render obedience to its king". But the information he goes on to give about this kingdom is largely unintelligible, and the information in other early writers is equally unsatisfactory and often confused.⁴⁰ It seems to have been the case that the early Muslim writers of the Middle East and North Africa had heard that Kawkaw was important, but had no knowledge of its institutions. They merely agreed on one thing: that Kawkaw was the next country worth mentioning to the west of Kanem/Borno. It is therefore to local sources that we must turn for information about the Za dynasty. These speak of a stranger who came to Kukiya on the upper Niger, rescued the people there from the clutches of the monster which lived in the river, became their king and founded the

origins of a type which is common in West Africa. It is different in nature from its learned traditions we are considering, and its special and obscure nature was recognised by the Muslim commentators of later Songhay dynasties who sought to interpret it in the light of the world outlook we have been considering. The name of the hero in this story was Za Alāyaman and they say that he came from the Yaman, from the land of Himyar.⁴¹

This then was the intellectual atmosphere in which the early *ulama* of the Kanuri lived, an atmosphere thick with indications of the great influence of Himyar in Africa in the ancient times, indications so closely in accord with an unquestioned world outlook that reasonable men, even if they did not possess the knowledge which produces certainty, might well be compelled to assume that the rulers of Borno were the sons of Himyar.

What more can be said in an attempt to show a clear picture of the influence of Himyar on the African continent in ancient times? One thing to note, perhaps is that the possibility of a pre-Islamic diaspora of the Himyarites across the Red Sea does not merely rest on the uncertain interpretation of obscure stories about the rulers of the Yeman or on other traditions recorded only long after the events they describe. There undoubtedly *was* a diaspora, probably more than one, and, moreover, the causes of it are well known.

The earliest of the South Arabian civilisations known to the archeologists of modern times was the Minaean, the site of whose capital city lies at Ma'in, north-east of San'a, and it is said to have flourished in the period c. 1200 — 650 B.C.⁴² The economic influence of this state was based on its resources in gold and frankincense and spices and on its strategic commercial position at the mouth of the Red Sea. It appears to have developed very widespread commercial connections as evidenced, for example, by the discovery of Minaean seals and inscriptions in lower Iraq. In addition Minaean colonies were founded far from the Yaman, such as the outpost of Ma'an near Petra, in what is now Jordan. This foundation of distant colonies as a result of the econo-

mic strength of Minaea is perhaps what is echoed in the writings of the early Muslim historians about the settlement of south Arabian tribesmen in Iraq and Tibet by the great conqueror Tubba Abu Karib of Himyar.⁴³ The archaeologists go on to say that during the later days of Minaea there arose another south Arabian kingdom, that of the Sabaeans, which eventually produced the most brilliant of the civilisations of the Yaman, lasting down to the beginning of the second century B.C. It had its first capital at Ma'rib site of the great reservoir and dam celebrated in Arabic literature.⁴⁴ This period of the history of the Yaman appears to have been characterised by further economic and general cultural development placing Saba among the great civilisations of the ancient world. It was at the height of this development that the Sabaeans crossed the Red Sea and settled in the mountains of Northern Ethiopia, as is evidenced by the discovery of inscriptions in the Sabaean language there, the language from which Ge'ez (the classical language of Ethiopia) is derived. Then during the second century B.C. the dynasty of Himyar (whose kings bore the title Tubba^c) appears to have replaced that of the Sabaeans, and Zafar became the capital in succession to Mār'ib. For a time Himyar appears to have remained as powerful as its predecessor, but its decline set in during the first five hundred years of the Christian era, and this great civilisation finally collapsed under the weight of invasion from Ethiopia at the beginning of the sixth century A.D.

During the last five hundred years B.C. the migration of Yamanites to distant parts of the world was made possible by the wealth of their country and the general pre-eminence of their civilisation. In the first five hundred years A.D. (the last years of the pre-Islamic era) emigration from the Yaman was necessitated by economic decline, and also provoked by a number of other internal troubles which then beset the country under Himyaritic rule. Early examples of this may have been the migration of the Banu Lakhm to settle in Iraq and the Banu Ghassan to settle in Syria, and their establishment of kingdoms in Hira and Hawran respectively in the third century A.D.⁴⁵ But this foundation of kingdoms on the frontiers of the great empires of Iran and Rome

were perhaps rather the last flicker of the expansive influence of ancient Himyar. The diaspora in the days of the decadence is more likely to have avoided the great centres of power of the Middle Eastern world; and only a few miles away from the land of Himyar, across the Bāb'al-Mandab lay the almost limitless plains of Africa, the country of the barbarians who lived between the Zinj and the Habacha, as Muhammad Bello puts it. This was an unexplored country, but remote from the trouble of the civilised world and a ready refuge for a people who would no longer find a livelihood or even safety in their homeland.

The economic decline of the Yaman in the early centuries of the Christian era is attributed by the early Muslim historians to collapse of the Ma'rib dam and the consequent destruction of the system of irrigation on which the agricultural development of the Yaman had been based and which had enabled the country to support a large population. It appears from the Himyaritic inscriptions discovered by the archaeologists that leakages in the barrage occurred over a long period and big breaches are reckoned to have occurred in 450 and 543 A.D, after which appears to have been abandoned.⁴⁶ But the wealth of the ancient Yaman was also derived from commerce. Not only was the country a great entrepot in the trade between the countries bordering the Indian Ocean on the one hand and Egypt and the lands of the fertile crescent on the other, but merchants of the Yemen appear to have had something approaching a monopoly of the carrying trade in the Red Sea and along the Hijaz road. But in the early centuries of the Christian era a powerful competitor appeared in this field: Rome. Although able to conquer the North Arab kingdoms of the Nabatheans and the Palmyrenes, the Romans were never able to incorporate the Yaman in their empire. But they certainly tried to do so, and there is evidence to show that they did much to destroy the commercial predominance of Himyar by their entry into the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade.⁴⁷

The historians also talk of political upheaval in the Yemen during those centuries. Al-Mas'udi says that dispute and conflict began in the reign of the Tubba Hassan

b. Kuli Karib who was eventually murdered by his brother Amru who then siezed the throne. Amru's successor Tubba b. Hassan was involved in wars in the Hijāz, and converted to Judaism. The reign of his successor also named Amru, saw further dynastic dispute as a result of which he was deposed and replaced by one Marthad b. Abi Kulal. But civil war continued. Then, after the exceptionally peaceful reign of Abraha b. al-Sabah, there came to the throne Dhu Shanatir, the sodomite, who was not of royal blood. In his day "immorality and perversion were manifest in the Yaman" and he was eventually killed by Yusūf Dhu Nawas who acquired notoriety by his persecution of the Christians of Najran. He committed suicide after the Ethiopian invasion of the Yeman in the third decade of the 6th century A.D. Religious discord appears to have made matters worse in this period. It is likely that there was a considerable influx of Jews into the Yeman after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., and this no doubt prepared the way for the conversion of Tubba b. Hassan which itself may have caused trouble as he is said to have been assassinated.⁴⁸ Subsequently Christian missionary activity developed in the 4th century, encouraged by the Roman Emperor Constantius (d.353 AD), who appointed Theophilus Indicus as bishop of the new churches in Ethiopia, the Yaman and india, and sent him on a mission to Himyar. It is possible that this was also the beginning of attempts by the Romans to interfere in the politics of the Yeman.⁴⁹

Whether the troubles in the Yeman which we have described briefly here did actually produce Yamani migration into Africa is not certain, but it is very likely. Before we leave this subject of evidence for a substantial diaspora of the Yemanites into Africa in pre-Islamic times, there is perhaps one other fragment to add. In the ancient Middle East the Arabs were distinguished from the peoples such as the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Isrealites, the Assyrians and the Persiand by their use of the singly-humped camel.⁵⁰ The Arabs and the camel went together and were indeed inseparable. In ancient times also the single-humped camel seems to have been largely confined to Arabia where it is

part of the native fauna. But nowadays of course this species is common in many parts of Africa. Because of the ancient "inseparability" of the Arab from the camel it is most likely that the animal was brought into Africa by Arabs, and it must have been from Arabs actually present in Africa with their camels that African people living in the desert conditions, acquired the use of this animal.⁵¹ Now the non-Arab *al-ba'ir* of Africa par excellence are the nomads of the central and southern Sahara. These people distinguished by many aspects of their way of life from their neighbours, both north and south. There are several groups of these people the Zaghawa, the Tubu, the Tuariq, the Sanhaja, etc. but they are all *mulaththamun* the "people of the veil". Ibn Khaldun has the following to say of them :

"The Mulaththamun, people of Sanhajanrrace, inhabited the barren region which extends to the south of the sandy desert. From time immemorial, for many centuries before Islam, they continued to roam in this region where they found all that they needed. Keeping away from the Tell and the cultivated land, they used the milk and flesh of their camels in place of agricultural products avoiding the civilised countries, they accustomed themselves to isolation, and had never bowed beneath the yoke of foreign domination. They occupied areas neighbouring on the settled country of the Habasha and the region which separates the country of the Berbers from that of the Sudan. They cover their faces with the *litham*, an article of clothing which distinguishes them from other nations. Multiplying in these vast plains, they formed several tribes such as the Jadala, the Lamtuna, the Masufa, the Uthzila, the Tarqa, the Zaghawa, the Lamta".

We do not know the early history of these people. But a plausible hypothesis may be that they were the descendants of those pre-desiccation inhabitants of the Saharan area who adapted themselves to the desiccation by acquiring the habits of the Arabian camel nomad. It is possible that they did this by contact with immigrant Arabs during the centuries which lie astride the beginning of the Christian era. Perhaps we may see a faint echo of this contact in the genealogists' belief that the Sanhaja are descended from Himyar. There appears to be little doubt that the rulers of Kanem were themselves "people of the veil" and their close association with the Tubu (especially the Tomagra) is well established. That immigrant Arab should, in those early centuries of the desiccation, have acquired great influence among the tribes of the central Sahara and led them to the occupation of Kanem is wholly probable, and this is just what the story of the Seifuwa implies.⁵¹

There are of course many other questions which remain to be answered in the analysis of this story. One that must be dealt with here is why, out of all the sons of Himyar, Safy b. Dhi Yazan should be regarded as the ancestor of the Seifuwa ?

In the 520's A.D the Ethiopians invaded the Yaman and the ruler of Himyar was overthrown. Ethiopian viceroys then ruled the country for a space of 72 years (according to al-Mas'udi) : that is to about 595 A.D. The early historians describe this period as a reign of terror in which the Ethiopians attempted systematically to destroy all that remained of the old Arab civilisation; and it was only brought to an end when a member of the royal family of Himyar appealed for help to the emperor of Persia Khusraw Anushirwan, who sent an army which finally succeeded in expelling the Habasha from the Yaman. The sources are not fully agreed on what happened next. But it appears most likely that the prince of Himyar who had called in the Persians was placed on the throne as a client, or ally of the Persian emperor, and supported by a Persian "resident". The situation continued down to the collapse of the Sassanid regime in Persia after the occupation of Ctesiphon by the Muslim Arabs in

637 A.D. By this time however the focus of interest of the Muslim historians has moved elsewhere and we read little about the Yaman until at the beginning of the 9th century A.D, when Abbasid caliphs extended their authority there.⁵²

Now, the prince of Himyar who appealed to Persia and thus engineered the expulsion of the Habasha from Arabia was Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. He is the last of the great heroes of Himyar and he is given great prominence in the writings of the early Muslim historians.⁵³

Sayf B. Dhi Yazan also caught the popular imagination of the Arabic-speaking world, and there gradually grew up around his memory a vast folk literature in which he is seen as a great magician and warrior, and adventurer in the story-tellers' world of marvels and mysteries. This literature in the rhymed prose and ballads of the *qasasiun* developed over the centuries, and the *sira* (saga), in the form we know it, finally took shape in Egypt, probably in the 16th century A.D.⁵⁴ Thus Sayf has come to occupy in the popular literature of the Arabic-speaking world a position comparable to that of Sundhbād, of Hārūn-al-Rashid, of the Sultan Baybars, and Abu Zayd al-Hilālī; a position similar to that of Odysseus, Beowulf, Roland, King Arthur and Robin Hood, in the folklore of Europe.⁵⁵

There are two aspects of his importance which are relevant to our story. First, there is his importance in the history of Islam. Here he is honoured as the guardian of *al-bayt al-haram*, the one who saved the sacred Ka'ba from desecration by the unbelievers. The story of the expedition of Abraha al-Ashram, the second Ethiopian viceroy of the Yaman, against Mecca at the time of the birth of the Prophet is well-known. It failed because of the plague which God brought on the Ethiopian army. But God's instrument in finally destroying the menace of the Ethiopian infidel was Sayf b. Dhi Yazan who is believed to have travelled as far as Rome and Persia to summon help against them. His success in expelling the Ethiopians from the Yaman is recorded in great detail in the early Islamic sources which tell how Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet and his guardian, travelled to Sana' to pay respects and offer con-

gratulations on the final defeat and expulsion of the Habasha.⁵⁶ By 9 A.H. the Himyarite royalty had adopted Islam which spread rapidly without hindrance among the south Arabs.⁵⁷ Many of the Ansār of Medina belonged to south Arab tribes and the whole attitude of the Himyarite Arabs to Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet compared very favourably with that of North Arab tribes such as Quraysh. Here was the Islamic basis of the dictum of the Prophet : *Himyar ra's Al-arab* (which we referred to above). It is certain that Sayf b. Dhi Yazan died before the Hijra and probably even before Laylat al-Qadr, and he was not himself a declared muslim.⁵⁸ But he was a martyr, killed in the defence of *dar al-Islam* against the unbeliever, and his expulsion of the Habasha from Arabia really entitles him to rank as a leader of the *ansar* and the first of the great *mujahidin*. Al-Mas'udi put the following words in the mouth of Abd al-Muttalib when he led the delegation of the people of Mecca to Sana' :

“You are the head of the Arabs and the rejuvenator of their race.

O king, you are the protector of the Arabs and their support.

You are the refuge of the servants of God. Your ancestors are the most excellent. And to us you are their most excellent son”.⁵⁹

The jihad of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan was against the Sudan of Africa, and it was for this same jihad that the Seifuwa of Kanem were to acquire their fame in the centuries to come.

The second aspect of his importance to be noted is his significance in the general theory of human history which we have been attempting to describe here. In the folklore certainly he emerges as a powerful instrument of human destiny, the last of the champions of the sons of Shem, charged with the implementation of the curse on Noah and a figure of terror to the sons of Ham. As said the Wazir of the Malik Sayf (in the words of the story-teller) :

“I have found in the old books and the accounts of the great battles that the

curse of Noah must be executed by the hand of a king of the Tababa a, and perhaps it will be you. O courageous king, O lion of lions!"⁶⁰

The particular sons of Ham who the Sayf of the folk tales was destined to rule were not only the Habasha, but all the progeny of Kush son of Canaan, including the Nuba and the Zinj and all the other Sudan of what we call tropical Africa. On this view again the legitimate rulers of the Sudan of Kanem/Borno were undoubtedly the sons of Sayf.

Once the intellectual basis of this view is grasped, explanations of other mysteries in the interpretation of Nigeria traditions of origin are immediately suggested. Now, of course, it is true that only one ruling dynasty here takes its origin specifically from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. But among the peoples living in the area which stretches from the south-western Katsina across the Niger to Borgu and northern Yorubaland there persists the legend that their rulers are descended from a certain Kisra who came with his people from the east long ago. This legend has attracted the attention of writers in recent times. But so far as I know, the possible connection of it with the story of Sayf has not yet been much discussed. Yet it is well-known that Kisra is the Arabic corruption of the Persian Khusraw, the title of the Sassanid emperors of Persia. Can it be that, in this legend, we have a faint echo of the very story we have been recounting : the story of the domination of the Sudan by Sayf b. Dhi Yazan and his ally Khusraw Anushirwan.⁶¹ I have admittedly not yet had the opportunity to examine this possibility in my detail. But if there is any thing in it at all, it must rank as further evidence of the deep-rooted cultural significance of the story of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan in Nigerian folklore.

Perhaps that is as far as we can go in our analysis of this tradition within the limits of the present essay. We have, I think been able to establish that it is a tradition of respectable antiquity, believed by learned men as much as seven centuries ago. We have agreed that there is evidence of Himyaritic immigration and political influence in the Sudanic and southern Saharan zones of Africa going back

to ancient times. And we have perhaps glimpsed the significance of the story of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan in both the Islamic and non-Islamic folklore of Nigeria. On the basis of the material we have been able to examine, there would seem to be no escaped from the conclusion that, even if the Seifuwa were not the descendants of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan there are many reasons why learned man, even of our own age, should think that they were. And in any case, even if they were not his biological descendents, there can be no doubt at all that they were his spiritual sons.⁶²

POSTSCRIPT : As was said at the beginning, this essay is incomplete for a number of reasons. One is that there exists one field of documentation, relevant to its theme, which it entirely neglects, namely : the writings of the Kanuri *ulama* themselves. The reason for this neglect is the difficulty that I have experienced in the recovery of such material. I have unfortunately been prevented by *ashghal sarifa* during the past ten years from visiting Borno and renewing my acquaintance with the *ulama* there. And the poverty of our established collections of their work on the subject is extreme. But as a beginning in the direction of examining such material I have thought it useful to add as an appendix to this essay, preliminary (and far from definitive) translations of those fragments of MS which are available to us here; with a few comments and the hope that other students with better opportunities and qualifications than mine will be able to travel much farther along this road.

I. Extracts of MS 'A'

(4 un-numbered plates in Ahmad Fartuwami, *Tarikh Mai Idris* ed. Palmer, Kano, 1928)

.....First, al-Sayf; his origin, the country of Gh?nih. He is the great one, the sultan...[copy corrupt] ... the country which he conquered; he occupied the sultanate for a hundred years. And the third, Ghiniyah, for twenty years, and the fourth, in the country of Budūnuh, for sixty years. And the fifth, Sām, for seventy years. What happened after that: al-Sayf came, and occupied the sultanate [of] Rumatun. After that he sat with the sultan and occupied [the sultanate] with him for sixty years. And he came to Kufuri, and is with them twenty years. After that he came to Kākū: He is with them, but did not occupy the sultanate, and he acquired knowledge. After that he came to Ghalaghah in his country Tāb?n, and they lived with them for fifty years. After that he came to Tumāghir, and he is with them without kingly authority. And they lived [together] sixty years. After that he came to Dughūtiḥ; and they lived with them in the country of Tabun, and for fifteen years. After that he came to Kāsna, the country of Ludamur and is with them for five years. S?mnun [?]. After that there came a man of the kindred, Abduḥ, ...[copy torn] ... who is with them six [?]. After that there came Fulata Sanqare to the country of Sumnun. Then they rose up and migrated to al Madina, and sat down for fifty years. Then they rose up [?] and he came and they sat in the Yeman for two hundred [years ?]. And the people of al-Madina came to them. His name was Muḥammad, on whom be the blessing and peace of God; and they were [there] fifty years. After this, he, on whom be the blessing and peace of God, sent a message to al-Sayf. The carrier of it was Mu adh b. Habal; and Uthman b. Affan, and Ibn Kab, and Zayd b. Thabit, may God be pleased with them. But they were angry that the Prophet should send to al-Sayf, saying "They do not believe in God". But the Prophet, on whom be the blessing and peace of God, said, "They are Muslims, not unbelievers. They are our brothers,

and this is their dwelling place". And they replied, "We ask pardon of God". At that time the Prophet remained alive for twenty years with al-Sayf. Then, after that time, the Prophet, may the blessing and peace of God be on him, died. The kingship passed into the hands of al-Sayf, and he assumed the government of al-Madina...

II. Extracts of MS "B"

(from Palmer's 'Army Book'; NHRS, ABU, Xerox Bk.2, pp.47 — 55) In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful : This a writing from our shaykh of days gone by. The learned shaykh said that the first sultan was al-Sayf, the great sultan. Then; his country was in Qudsah. He occupied the sultanate in Qudsah with an army for a hundred years. The second [country] Z?ghir for two hundred years. The third, Agh?nih, for twenty years. The fourth, B?d?ni, for sixty years. The fifth, Sam, seventy years. Then after that al-Sayf came to the country of R?? and occupied the sultanate. After that he came to the tribe of Qufuri, and is with them twenty years. After that he came to the tribe of Kanku, and is with them as sultan. And they acquired knowledge. After that he came to the tribe of al-Khabashiya, and is with them. After that he came to D?b?r?, and they lived [together] five years. After that he came to the tribe of Wahb of the Arabs who is T?m?k?n, and is with them without the kingship. And they lived [together] sixty years. He came to the tribe of D?ghut; and he is with them; and they lived in the country Babil, and for fifteen years. After that he came to the tribe of K?jid; and he drew them together in a body [?—] and he is with him thirty three years. After that he came to the country H?m?n also S?mak?, and is with them five years. After that, there came from among the men of Ibrahim, His servant, a man named Arku, and he is with them one year. After that there came to the country S?min F?l?n?t S?q?r?... [?].... And he sat them down for five years. And they rose up, and their dwelling place was in the Yeman two hundred [years?]. After that he came, and they were in al-Madina when Muhammad, on whom be the blessing and peace of God, sent them a

message. The carriers of it were Muadh b. Jabal, Uthman b. Affān, Umayy [?] b. Ka b, and Zayd b. Thabit, may God be pleased with them. But they refused to be sent ... [?].... They said, "We are Muslims. These people do not believe in God. How?" But the Prophet of God said to them, "They are our brothers, believers; and this is their dwelling place. And they replied, "Pardon is asked of God". And the Prophet, on whom be peace, remained alive with al-Sayf for twenty years. Then he died after that time.....

III. Extracts of MS "C"

(from *Kitāb al-Barnu* by Muhammad b. al-Sultān cAli b. al-Hājǵ : an incomplete photograph of a copy from the papers of Al-Hājǵ Abu Bakr al-Miskin of Maiduguri)There is no doubt that the king of the Yeman Sayf b. Dhi Yazan, may God embrace him in his mercy, restored the affairs of the Yeman ruined by Abraha al-Ashram and all that the malevolence of the Ethiopians had disrupted as a result of their seizure of power in the Yeman. They had corrupted the laws, bringing weakness in place of strength, bringing hardship on the righteous and well-being to the evil-doers. When he saw that, Sayf b. Dhi Yazan harnessed the stead of endeavour and determination, and sharpened the sword of zeal and honour, and went to Caesar to beg help from him against the Habasha. But he would not help them. So he went to Kisra.....[There follows here a lengthy account of the negotiations undertaken by Sayf with Kisra; the despatch of the Persian army to the Yeman ; the deferred expulsion of the Ethiopians, and the appointment of Persian residents at San a'].

Then after that Sayf and his people remained in the Yeman for a century. They fought Wahriz, and siezed the kingship. And they were associated with the Messenger of God, may God's blessing and peace be on him, for twenty years during this sojourn. And he, on whom be God's peace, died; and Abubakr al-Sadiq assumed the caliphate. Bādhān was at that time the *mutawali* over Sayf's people, and remained so for five years after that. The *khalifa* of Sayf took place in the year.....And Badhan died in the year.....

Among the noble habits of Sayf was his practice of always providing food in his courtyard for 3,000 people, great and small. And Badhan did no less, but continued after the death of Sayf in the Yeman, until he himself died, also in the Yeman.

Then Ibrahim b. Sayf b. Dhi Yazan was entrusted with the government of the Yeman after Badhan in the year..... until the year..... And he did more good and generous work even than his father or his brother Badhan. He was courageous and of great reputation until he died in the Yeman in the year mentioned above. After Ibrahim, his son Dhuk? b. Ibrahim b. Sayf b. Dhi Yazan was entrusted with the caliphate over the Yeman. He was a courageous warrior and a rover. He migrated from the Yeman to Z?rū, and they held sway over it by force. There they remained for more than twenty years. Then he raided many places. He dwelt in Badhan raining the unbelievers and polytheists among the people of the countries which defied him, until he died (may God be kind to him) in the year.....

After him, his son F?ni b. Duk? b. Ibrahim b. Sayf b. Dhi Yazan was entrusted with the government of his people on the death of his parent Duk? in a town called Yari Arbasan. There is his grave which is visited. And he migrated to al-Sham, and settled there, and held sway over towns in its various regions. He dwelt there for some time, seizing control of countries by force. He was a roving plunderer and destroyer. Always when setting out and coming in, every morning and evening, he would slaughter ninety-five victims, until he died in a town called Ghani Ghuluk in the year.....

And after him, his son Arshu b. Funi was entrusted with the government of his people. He showed great zeal and energy in the worship of one God and the revival of the Sunna. He mastered *junud* and *asakir* and *ghilman*, and raided al-Rum and held away over it. Then he remained there for some time, and went abroad seeking further power. His appointed hour came in a town called Ghalambuta Buniwa. There is his grave, and it is visited. He was a

majlana in the worship of the Lord of the universe, and he died in the year..... May God be merciful to him and grant him a place in his spacious heaven. Amen.

Then after him his son K?tur was entrusted with the government. He diligently maintained the traditions of his forefathers and revered their memory. He raided and conquered the tribe of Kubri and held sway over them. He raided Kanghy, and held sway over them. He warned his followers against oppressing the servants of God, and ordered them to adhere to the Sunna of the Messenger of God, on whom be God's blessings and peace. He fed his people better than did other kings. He raided a great deal and was victorious. He sought more knowledge from Kanghu; and the truth is that he did not rule this tribe, but he attached himself to it and established relations with it, and acquired knowledge from them,. Then he attacked al-Habash, and conquered them. He was pre-occupied with the kingship and with control over his allies, and with campaigns, until he died in a town called Kaygham Kurnawa in the year.....

His son Buyumah was appointed to the caliphate after him, and he followed the way of his father in zeal and worship. He was a towering figure, a conqueror, victorious. He sought more places and countries and occupied them. He raided al-Dibiri and ruled them. He raided many places which defied him, and conquered them. He wiped out all dissension, until he died in the year.....in a town called Abuyū.

After him his son Bulu b. Buyumah was appointed to the caliphate. He was just, and worshiped God; and died in a town called Maghi Zaramtam in the year.....

After him, his son Arku b. Bulu was appointed to the caliphate. He drew the sword of determination and sharpened it, tightened the belt of courage, and struck the spark to light other fire of war. He attacked the Wahhabiyin, Arabs known as Tumakuri. But they did not conquer them or humble them, but dwelt with them for more than sixty years. Then they moved to al-Daghji in better conditions [?] and conquered it. That country is among the countries

of Bābil. They remained there, competing for food and comfort, until Arku b. Bulū, the emir, died raiding in Jilān Adh?lan in the year.....

And they entrusted the government of his people to his son, the snarling lion...[?].... But he soon died in the year..... He was the sultan Shiyū b. Arkū, the resolute. They say he died raiding villages in the stony hills known as Katashi...

IV. Some Comments on the three manuscripts.

1. It is clear that many lines of inquiry will be opened up by the study of such texts as these. It is not the purpose of this essay to follow any of them up here, but merely, by presenting rough translation, to draw attention in a very preliminary fashion to one or two features of the literature at present available to us in this field.

2. MSS "A" & "B" are very crude and corrupt copies (possibly even made from memory) of writings which are not at present available to us. The Arabic is very bad, and it is clear that the copyists did not know the meaning of some of the words. These texts do not belong at all to any tradition of scholarship, and we must clearly look elsewhere for a classical statement of the traditions of origin of the Seifuwa. Nevertheless such texts certainly merit study as many important questions arise as to their precise status and the various forms of corruption which they appear to embody.

3. MS "C" is obviously quite different. This is a learned work, containing even quotations from classical Arabic literature, and is clearly written by a scholar in the old tradition. One interesting feature is the attempt to establish a chronology for the early kings. This is unsuccessful, as it involves spreading twelve reigns over some 500 years. The dates of death are actually given in years A.D; some of them have been altered in the copy; and so, believing them to be insertions by a recent copyist, I have left them out.

4. In "A" and "B" the initial contact of the Seifuwa with the tribes which came to form the Kanuri people is all

placed in the lifetime of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. In MS "C" this gradual welding of the tribes into a nation is not attributed to Sayf at all, but to his successors. The process by which, at the level of folklore (as distinct from learning) the achievements of many generations come to be attributed to one hero, is, of course, well-known. Here we have a very sticking example of its operation.

5. MSS "A" & "B" speak of the return of Sayf to the Yaman and Madina after the seizure of power over the tribes. Here one might, I suppose, imagine a "concession" by the "folkloristic" principle (which requires Sayf to monopolise all important activity) to the "historical" principle (which requires Sayf to die in the Yeman). MS "C", of course, says nothing about this. But in a later passage (not translated here) it attributes the return to Jil b. Shiyu, the 11th successor of Sayf. In this later passage, the author of "C" curiously enough *repeats* some of the material he has given in his introductory account of Sayf's relations with the Prophet. And to make matters more mysterious, the language used by "A" and "B" in their account of the "return" of Sayf is strangely reminiscent of the language used by "C" in the repetitive parts of the excursus he makes during the account of the reign of Jil. There seems to be the shadow of some ancient common source looming in the background here.

6. A mention of the special position of the Tomagra nomads vis a vis the Seifuwa in a feature common to the texts.

7. The question of proper names. I have left the name in their Arabic form because of uncertainty about the precise Kanembu Kanuri equivalents. It appears at least however, that the conventional final —h in the texts indicates a final short vowel a (as distinct from *alif* or *tā marbuta*). Some of the names are easily identifiable, others, require further study. A particularly interesting case of the corruption of proper names is to be seen in Fulatah Sanqarē ("A"), F?l?m?t S?q?r? ("B"), Falayta al-S:k?ri ("C"), the last occurring in a later untranslated passage.

REFERENCES

1. The earliest work of this nature is probably S. Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, written in the 1890's but not published until 1921 (Lagos). Following Johnson we have J.O. Lucas, *The Religion of the Yorubas* (Lagos, 1948) and *Religions in West Africa* (Lagos, 1970); and S.O. Biobaku, *The Origin of the Yorubas* (Lugard Lectures, 1956). Two important general works which have been neglected in recent years are: H. Tegnæus, *Le Heros Civilisateur* (Stockholm, 1950); and H. Solken, *Inner-afrikanische Wege nach Benin* (Anthropus, 49, Berlin, 1954, pp. 809 — 933). Specifically on Hausa tradition there is an earlier work of H. Solken, *Afrikanische Dokumente zur Frage der Hausanischen Diaspora in Oberguinea* (Mitteilungen der Auslands-Hochschule, Berlin, XLII, 3, 1939, pp. 1 — 127); W.K.R. Hallam *The Bayejida Legend in Hausa Folklore* (JAH, VII, 1966, pp. 47 — 59); Abdullahi Smith, *Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland* (JHSN, V, 3, 1970, pp. 329 — 346). On the Seifuwa, material is scattered in H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs* (Lagos, 1928) and *Borno Sahara and Sudan* (London, 1936). Also of recent date (1813), but not belonging to the Western tradition of writing, is the important introductory section of Muhammad Bello b. al-Shaykh Uthman, *Infraq al-maysur fi tarikh bilad al-Tukur* (ed. whitting, London, 1951; ed. Abubakar Gumi, Cairo, 1960). This work relates a number of Nigerian traditions of origin, and has been used by later writers such as S. Johnson.
2. Even now, I have been unable to see a number of important works bearing on this subject. Where I have not consulted the text of works of early Islamic scholarship, but only translations, I have indicated this in the footnotes. The following have not been available to me at all: A. Caussin de Perceval, *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme* (Paris, 1847 — 8, 3 vols); R. Paret, *Saif Ibn Jazan, ein arabischer Volksroman* (Hanover, 1944). My knowledge of the history of the Yeman is particularly defective. I have not seen a number of the works cited by Ibn Khaldun. I have not seen H. Cassels Kay, *Yemen, its medieval history by Najm ad-din Omarah al-Hakami* (London, 1892) or Al-Khazraji, trans. Redhouse as *Pearl Strings, a history of the Rasuli Dynasty of Yemen* (Gibb Mem., i, 1906; ii, 1907).
3. The written Bornoan sources of this tradition known to me are as follows: what appears to be the earliest detailed account (probably, though not certainly, written about 1750) is contained in a very corrupt fragment published (with a misleading translation) by H.R. Palmer in *Tarikh Mai Idris wa ghazawatih* (Kano, 1932, introduction pp. n — 9 and four unnumbered plates). A similar text, also very corrupt, is in the Palmer MS Collection (NHRS, ABU, Xerox Bk. 2, pp. 47 — 55). A more recent and more detailed account free of corruption is: Muhammad b. al-Sultan Ali b. al-Hajj, *Kitab al-Barmu*. The author was the son of the Mai Ali who was assassinated in 1846, and he appears to have written it at the beginning of this century. I have been able to use an incomplete photograph of a copy lent for microfilming to the Librarian of the University of Ibadan in 1965 by Al-Hajj Abu Bakr al-Miskin of Maiduguri, a descendant of the author. See Appendix to this essay. Many other indications of the tradition do of course exist in MSS; but these are usually confined to the bald statement that Sayf (sometimes called Ibn Dhi Yazan and sometimes Aisami) was the first of the dynasty and (usually) in the Yeman. An early (late 16th century) mention of this nature is, for example, in Ahmad b. Fartuwa (Palmer, *Tarikh*, text, p. 2).
4. If it were the case that the Seifuwa were sons of Himyar, it would even be reasonable to suggest that their forebears actually *founded* this ancient Ethiopian dynasty in the first millenium BC, when the Sabaeans, ancestors of Himyar, crossed over the Red Sea from the Yeman (that is: if the Ethiopians' tradition on this subject is reliable).

5. The question of the cultural influence of Borno in the history of the people of Nigeria generally, and those of what are now the Republics of Niger, Chad and Cameroun, is an obscure and neglected subject at the present time. But there is no doubt of its importance. The probability is that when it is adequately studied, the story of the great "Sudanese Empires" of the past will be seen in an entirely new perspective.
6. This was the view of the anthropologist Malinowski (*The Dynamics of Culture Change : an Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, New Haven 1945), and has set the fashion of western writing on such matters in recent times.
7. Of the widespread opinion with regard to the sharifian ancestry attributed to the Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello. But the sources show a possibility that this attribution is correct. See e.g. the genealogical material published by D.M. Last (*The Sokoto Caliphate*, London, 1967).
8. *Tarikh*, introduction, p.2.
9. A possible argument (though lacking force, in my opinion) might be for example that the tradition that the Yoruba came into Nigeria from the east was not believed anywhere until after the publication of Muhammad Bello's *infaq al-maysur*, and even now only by Muslim and Christian Yoruba.
10. *Kitab al-mughrib fi Akhbar Bilad Ifriqiyya wa-l-Maghrib* (ed. de Slane Paris, 1911, p. 11).
11. The Caliph al-Ma'mun is said to have sent the emir Muhammad b. Ziyad into Arabia who founded the Ziyadid dynasty of emirs which included the Yeman in its territory. In one of the fragments cited in fn. 3 above the name Hummay is infact spelt Umay.
12. Ed. Gines, Tetuan, 1958. I have dealt briefly with this passage in Ajayi & Crowder (eds.) *A History of West Africa*, vol I, ch V (London, 1971.) Ibn Said appears to have died either in 1274 or in 1286 AD.
13. Abu al-Fida (d. 1331 AD) *Taqwim al-buldan* (ed. Reinaird & de Slane Paris, 1840), cited here from al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-acsha'* (Cairo 1913 — 22, vol V, p.280). Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari (d. 1349 AD.), *Masalik al-abasr fi mamalik al-ansar* (trans. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Paris, 1927 p.45—. Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi (d. 1442), *Al-Mawa-iz wa-l-itibar fi dihr al-athar* (Bulaq, 1270, 2 vols). I have only seen the passage of al-Maqrizi in the translation by Palmer (*Borno Sahara* p192.)
14. Reproduced by al-Qalqashandi. It is well-known, of course, that al-Qalqashandi disputed this claim, saying, "He [the Mai] does not merit this ancestry because he also mentioned that he is of Quraysh. And he is mistaken in this because Sayf b. Dhi Yazan was descended from the Tubabai of the Yeman, from Himyar. But this may only be ground for disputing a claim to Qarashi ancestry. And in any case the Bornoan tradition asserts that the mother of Sayf was a woman of Mecca, and it is not impossible that there was such a woman among the wives of Dhu Yazan. It is likely that the Bornoan ulema followed the old tradition which placed Quraysh in an essentially subordinate position among the hierarchy of the Arab tribes and only mentioned their connection with it out of respect for the Prophet who himself had said, "Himyar is the head of the Arabs' camel and Quraysh is its progeny and the humpon its back". This tradition was actually quoted to Palmer by one of his informants (NHRS, ABU, Xerox Bk. 2, p.240). It is interesting in this connection to note the reaction of the Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur of the Maghrib when Mai Idris Aloma mentioned to him his descent from Sayf b. Dhi Yazan. The sultan did not dispute it but hastened to point out his on seniority in the Islamic heirarchy by saying that if Idris was descended from the first of the *tabiun*, he, Ahamad, was descended from the Prophet himself. See : *Ras'il sadiyya* (ed. Abdullah Guennun, Tetuan).
15. Al-Maqrizi, op.cit., ed. Wiet, Paris, 1922, iii, 2, p. 266. Among the colleges of al-Azhar, Riwaq al-Barnu (the centre for students from Borno) appears

to have achieved some prominence, and is said to have attracted students from other parts of the Sudan also, such as the Jabarta. But it is not known how early this college developed. The reputation of the ulema of Kanem is grudgingly admitted by al-cUmari who thought fit to make the following pompous remarks about them; "There may even perhaps be some among them [the people of Kanem] who have begun to acquire learning, who have contemplated the stars of literature, and have admitted the weakness of their knowledge, who have not ceased to treat the illness of their ignorance or to coax their untrained perception; until the radiance of the stars shines on them, and their possessions are enriched by its embroidery". (quoted in al-Qalqashandi, *loc cit.* Contrast the translation of this passage in Gaudenfroy-Demombynes, p. 44).

16. Interpreted here as: "We have made of you nations and tribes, so that you may know each other".

17. I believe there is a tradition that the Prophet said: "There is no harm in recounting stories of the Bani Israil".

18. For this essay, I have used the Guillaume translation of the *Sira* of Muhammad b. Ishaq (d. 767 AD) (*The Life of Muhammad*, OUP, 1955). The recent edition of the *Maghazi* of al-Waqidi (d. 823 AD), by M. Jones, was unfortunately not available to me.

19. The following early historical works have been used here:

Al-Yacqubi (d.c.900 AD), *Al-tarikh* (ed. 6 vols, Beirut, 1379/1960;)

Al-Tabari (d. 923 AD), *Tarikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* (French translation of the Persian, by Zontenburg, repr., Paris, 1958, 4 vols)

Al-Masudi (d. 951 AD) *Muruj al-dhabab wa macadin al-jawhar* (ed. Yusuf Daghir, 2 vols, Beirut, 1385/1965)

I am indebted to Mr. M.A. Al-Hajj for drawing my attention to the detailed account of Sayf b. Dhi Yazan in al-Masudi. But I have not been able to see Ibn Quatyba, *Kitab al-maarif* (ed. Wustenfelf, Gottingen, 1850).

20. There is a considerable archaeological literature on this subject. A popular treatment is in L. Wolley, *Ur of the Chaldees* (Harmondsworth, 1938) and N.K. Sanders (ed) *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Harmondsworth, 1960). In the central Sudan the great floods of the last pluvial age, and especially their cultural implications, have hardly been studied at all. But it is a fact that the land of Kanem Borno was completely under water down to 7000 BC at least and probably much later. See some scanty bibliography in my chapter in Ajayi & Crowder, *op. cit.*

21. *op. cit.*, i, pp. 15 — 16. The Tawrah says: "... These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread". (Genesis, 9, 18, King James' Version).

22. Interpreted here as: "He it is who has created mankind from water, and has made for it kindred by descent and kindred by marriage".

23. See particularly Genesis 10 & 11. 10, 32 says: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood".

24. Rosenthal's translation (*Ibn Khaldun: the Muqaddimah*, 3 vols., NY, 1958), i, pp. 172 — 3. That is: *Kitab al-Ibar* (Bulaq, 1284, 7 vols), i, p. 72. This passage is part of Ibn Khaldun's criticism of the *ulama'* *al-ansab* and their theories of the origin of peoples, to which he was much opposed. He says that some of them "have no knowledge of the nature of things". But the trouble he goes to in refuting them (two closely printed pages of the 2nd Bulaq edition of the *Muqaddima* are devoted to nothing else) indicates that their views were still widely accepted in his day. And it is to be noted that he was writing long after our tradition had been established. Ibn Khaldun died in 1406.

25. The highly 'tribalised' society of the pre-Islamic Arabs also developed a tradition of interest in genealogy which continued into the Islamic era. The earliest general works on Arab genealogies by Muslim scholars of which I have note are:

Ibn Durayd (d. 974 AD) *Kitab al-Istiqaa* (ed. Wustenfeld, Gottinge 1854); and Al-Baladhuri, d. 892 A.D. *Ansab al-Ashraf* (various printings). F. Rosenthal *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden, 1952, p. 8, draws attention to a Persian work of the early 13th century AD, which presents the history of the whole world in the form of a family tree: Fakr al-Din Mubarak Shah, *Shajara iansab*. Rosenthal also claims that it was in the Maghrib that the 'genealogical' method of writing history persisted longest. The work on this science which I have been able to use here is Ibn al-Samani (d. 1166 AD) *Al-Ansab* (ed. cAbd al-Rahman al-Yamani, 2 vols, Hyderabad 1962) which gives an introduction on the theory of *al-ansab*, saying, for example: "Knowledge of genealogies is one of the greatest benefits which God, may He be exalted, has bestowed on his worshippers; because the ramifications of *ansab* are one of the means of facilitating agreement on the separation of tribes and clans, and equally of differences of language and manners and variations of colour and character according to what God has said." He quotes a number of traditions of the Prophet, such as:

"Learn from your genealogies what are your relations of kinship. For indeed relations of kinship evoke love among the people, are a support when death comes, and bring abundance in wealth".

"Know your genealogies which establish your kinship relations, for there is no closeness of kinship if the genealogies are disrupted, even though there is an apparent proximity. And kinship is not distant if the genealogies show connection, even remote".

Ibn Khaldun was, as we have mentioned above, a great critic of genealogists. But he naturally accepted the Islamic teachings of this subject, and was himself intensely interested in the ancestry of peoples and tribes. His discussion of the ancestry of the Berbers which we refer to below occupies nineteen pages in the de Slane translation of *Kitab al-Ibar*. What he rightly objected to was the mass of unfounded inferences which the genealogists tended to draw from their material.

26. Many genealogical fragments are contained in the matter recorded by ulema for Palmer, e.g. NHRS, ABU, Xerox Bk. 1, pp. 193 — 5; Bk. 2, pp. 215 — 218 — 22, 239 — 41, 267 — 79 etc. Particularly interesting is the *Nisba* of the imam Abd al-Rahman (father of the imam Adam Asil of Yerwa) given there. This traces the ancestry of this calim back to Muadh b. Jabal whom the Prophet sent on a mission of Himyar (Ibn Ishaq, trans. Guillaume, pp. 643 — 4). A brief universal history (*Tarikh al-dunya wa-macarifatuhu*) is at NHRS Xerox Bk. 3, pp. 179 — 85.
27. e.g. Al-Yaqubi, i, p. 15; Altabari, trans. Zotenberg, i, p. 115; Al-Masudi, i, 52. The Tawrah, Genesis 9, 25 — 27, says: "And he [Noah] said: Cursed be Canaan a servant of servants shall he be unto his bretheren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." The origin of the idea that this curse was also to the effect that the sons of Ham should be black is not clear (to me at least). Ibn Khaldun was contemptuous of it, as we have seen. It appears in fact to have been a controversial matter among the historians (as Osman S.A. Ismail has shown in a recent unpublished paper: *As - Sudan and Bilad as-Sudan in early and medieval Arabic Writing*, Khartum, 1968. But in Africa this idea died hard. For example, the well-known *Kitab al-Zinj*, an otherwise scholarly work written in East Africa shortly after 1888, commences with the following remarkable statement: "Praise be to God, the Creator, the Beloved, Lord of grace and munificence, Who gave His creatures their particular colours, white and red and black, and vouchsafed to some of the mastery over others and power and good fortune and Who prescribed for those cursed by their father black faces and the enslavement of their children." (F. Cerulli, *Somalia*, Rome, 1957, i, p. 233).

28. In the Saharan reaches of the Nile valley, the usage persists in the place-name Al-Barbar (Berber) and the ethnic name al-Barabira, used to indicate the old Nubian peoples of Kanuz, Mahass, Sukhut, etc. (See H. Mac-Michael, *History of the Arabs in the Sudan*, Cambridge, 1922, ii, p. 13).
29. e.e. Claudius Ptolemy (c. 150 A.D.), *Ptolemaei Geographia*; and Cosmas Indicopleusted (547 AD), trans, as *Christian Topography* (both cited by G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast*, OUP, 1962, pp. 3—7) both refer to the Horn of Africa as Barbaria.
30. *Infraq al-maysur* (Whitting ed., pp. 7—9). This passage, which is full of interest, merits translation in full:

"The country of Borno : It is a country.....inhabited by Berbers (al-Barbar) and the aforementioned Arabs [i.e. arab must ajamun] and the Fulani; and also in it are slaves of al-Barbar, the remnants of al-Barabira who were between al-Zinj and al-Habush. These are they whom Himyar drove from the Yeman after Ifriqish b. Tubba [Whitting gives Ifriqin wa Tubba; Abubakar Gumi, Ifriqis Tubba]. The reason for their being in the Yeman, according to what they say, was that the people of Syria appealed for help to Ifriqish b. Tubba when the Barabira were causing great trouble there; and he helped them against, them, and ought them and broke up their communities, and enslaved their children. And when he saw their bravery he kept their offspring with him to help him. But after his death they rose with violence against Himyar. The latter drove them from the Yeman, and they settled in *Ifriqiyya min ard al-Habasha*. Then they appeared in Kanem and settled there. In the country they found non-Arab peoples under the authority of their brothers, the Tuariq called Amkita, and they seized the country from them. Their domination began in the days of their settlement in the country, until they gained possession of the farthest corners of this region."

The Tuariq Amkita are nowadays a group of the Eastern Ullimeden living in Damargu on the north-eastern borders of the old Bornoan territory.

31. French translation in de Slane (ed.) *Histoire des Berberes* (4 vols, Paris, 1927), i, pp. 167 — 185. *Kitab al-ibar* (2nd Bulaq), vi, pp. 89 — 98.
32. Mentioned in Genesis 10,6.
33. These, of course, are the nomads of the western Sahara. See below, p. 38.
34. Ahmad b. Khallikan (d. 1282) A.D), *Wafayat al-Ayan wa-anba' abna' al-zaman* (ed. Cairo, 3 vols, 1299). This passage is from the French translation by de Slane, Paris, 4 vols, 1842 — 71, ii, pp. 35 — 6.
35. From the Zotenburg translation, i, pp. 289 — 90, 504.
36. As Ibn Khaldun points out, the word *mahgrib* has the general meaning of "west from Arabia". Its use to mean only the North African coastlands is a specialised one.
37. Freeman-Grenville, *loc. cit.*
38. *Kitab al-Zinj* (Cerulli, *loc. cit.*).
39. The Emir of Adamawa was known officially as *Amir al-Yaman*.
40. Al-Yaqubi, i, pp. 193 — 4. A misleading attempt at translating this passage in J.S. Trimingham, *History of Islam in West Africa* (OUP, 1962, pp. 85 — 6).
41. cAbd al-Rahman al-Sadi, *Tarikh al-Sudan* (ed. Houdas & Benoist, Paris, 1898, pp. 4 — 5. J. Rouch, *Contribution a L'histoire des Songhay* (IFAN. 1953, pp. 169 — 172) does not seem to have grasped the real cultural significance of this tradition.
42. In this brief sketch of the Yeman in ancient times I have followed p. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London, 1949), and am conscious that it may be quite out of date.
43. e.g. Al-Tabari, trans, i. p. 506.
44. I have not seen Hasan al-Hamdani (d. 945 AD) *Al-Iklil* (ed. al-Karmali, Baghdad, 1931), the celebrated account of the antiquities of the Yeman.
45. Hitti, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 — 84.

46. See e.g. A. Kammerer, *La Mer Rouge, l'Abyssinie et l'Arabie depuis l'Antiquité* (2 vols, Cairo, 1929 — 35).
47. See e.g. M. Wheeler, *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (Harmondsworth 1955, chs 8 — 14) for archaeological evidence of Roman entry into the Indian Ocean trade.
48. This brief account of political developments in the Yemen is mainly taken from al-Masudi, ii, pp. 48 — 52.
49. Theophilus Indicus was the priest whom Gibbon described as the "perpetual enemy of peace and virtue, a bold, bad man, whose hands were alternately polluted with gold and blood." (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Everyman, London, 1910, iii, p. 131). An account of Roman policy towards Himyar during the reign of the Emperor Justinian is given in Procopius, *de Bello Persico*, i, 19 ff.
50. It does appear that in ancient times the camel was widely regarded as a peculiar animal which only the Arabs knew how to handle. Whenever the camel is mentioned in the ancient sources, the Arab is mentioned along side it (as in the Assyrian inscription of 854 BC, quoted by Hitti, p.37). See also Herodotus on the highly specialised nature of the Arab camel, camel units in the army of Xerxes (*History*, vii, 86, 87, ed. Macaulay, London 1897).
51. The quotation from Ibn Khaldun is taken from de Slane's translation, ii, p. 64. Enquiry concerning the introduction of the camel into Africa appears mainly to have confined its attention to North Africa (e.g. E. Gautier, *Le passe de l'Afrique du Nord : les Siecles obscurs*, Paris, 1952, liver iii). But note a fragment of archaeological evidence from the Upper Nile : a bronze figure of a camel among grave-goods from the pyramid of Arikankharer at ancient Merowe (c. BC 20 — AD15), mentioned in J. Arkell, *History of the Sudan to 1821* (London, 1955, Seifuwa p.163). The close association of the Seifuwa with the Tomagra branch of the Tubu nomads (nowadays in Tibesti) is attested in many MSS. Their ancestor has an Arabic name in the Bornoan sources : Wabil b. Wahb (see e.g. NHRS, ABUB *Less Nomades noirs du Sahara*, Paris, 1957 ; and A. Kronenberg, *Die Teda von Tibesti*, Vienna, 1958. So far as I know, the ancient cultural significance of the widespread use of the modified face-veil by the aristocracy of Borno and Hausaland down to the present day, has never been studied.
52. See fn above.
53. Al-Tabari, trans, ii, chs 38 — 41; al-Yaqubi, i, p.200 ; Al-Masudi, ii, pp.53 — 57 ; Ibn Ishaq, trans, p.30 — 33.
54. *Sirat al-Malik Sayf* (Cairo, 4 vols., n.d.). This mainly concentrates on Sayf's relations with the Ethiopian King Sayfa Arad who lived in the 14th century AD. It is unlikely that these stories would have risen in the lifetime of Sayfa Arad. They are much more like to have developed later in Egypt when the Ottoman authorities were actually in conflict with rulers of Ethiopia.
55. For an illuminating discussion of the relation between folktales and historical records in Europe in the latter part of the first millenium AD, see M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (trans. Manyon, London 1961, 2 Vols), i, ch.5.
56. Al-Masudi, ii, pp.58 — 9.
57. Ibn Ishaq, trans, pp.642 — 4.
58. See al-Masudi, ii, p.56.
59. ii, 58 — 9.
60. *Sirat Al-Malik*, i, p.14. Elsewhere (i.p.2) he is called : "exterminator of the unbelievers and the polytheists and the heretics in every country and city, destroyer of sorcery and impiety. His moral stature in folklore as the champion of good against evil, right against wrong, requires further examination.
61. On the Kisra legend see the bibliography and discussion in Solken, *Innerafrikanished Wege*. Also Biobaku, *op cit*.
62. The whole question of the metaphors used in folklore is, of course yet another vast subject which cannot be broached here.



SECTION B
THE ECONOMY

CHAPTER III

**ECONOMIC FACTORS IN
THE HISTORY OF BORNO
UNDER THE SEIFUWA**

by
MUHAMMAD NUR ALKALI

When the kingdom of Kanem collapsed in the mid-thirteenth century after the reign of Mai Dunama Dabalemi, the main causes were attributed to the political crisis and civil disorder which occurred among the various ruling factions that existed at the time. The Kanem ulama themselves seemed to have emphasized the belief that the root cause of the collapse of the power of the Mais in Kanem was the destruction of a sacred talisman — Mune-by Mai Dunama Dabalemi.¹ A great deal of emphasis has been placed on political or religious factors. No serious attempts have yet been made to consider the economic factor which is mostly been overlooked. But when we begin to ask ourselves certain general questions about the Seifuwa history at various stages certain facts particularly in connection with the economy of the state would emerge. For instance, why did the Seifuwa Mais fail to continue with their rule in Kanem after the thirteenth century, but re-emerged about two centuries later in Borno? Again, why was their rule much stronger in Borno than Kanem? Also in Kanem it took them nearly four centuries to rise to the position of supremacy while in Borno they had emerged as the dominant power one century after the foundation of their new capital Birni Gazargamo. Again whereas they collapsed in Kanem after rising to the peak of their power, in Borno they entered into a period of consolidation as from the seventeenth century and ruled for two more centuries almost unchallenged.

It is often argued that the main factor behind the Seifuwa dominance in the Central Sudan was military, and that the Seifuwa depended largely on their cavalry and superior military innovations which were introduced by rulers

such as Mai Idris Aloma. In a more confused interpretation by Richmond Palmer, which also reflects the colonial vision of African history this military factor was again emphasized. Palmer who was quite familiar with the expansion of the British Empire assumes that the Seifuwa Mais also emerged in Borno as the dominant power as a result of the use of their military strength for economic ends. According to him.

“It is clear that from the very first Borno lacked any potent feeling of national interest or solidarity. The Empire of the Mais was composed mainly of pastoral clans which though related to each other had no common bond except a certain respect for the Royal clan of the Magumi or Seifuwa, a bond which naturally grew weaker and not stronger by lapse of time. The Magumi themselves and their subject clans and allied people such as the Tubu and Arabs had grown rich by raiding and enslaving the helpless negro populations by which they were surrounded and had in 1808 been for three centuries living almost solely on the labour of thousands of slaves necessary to provide supplies for the men and beasts of an indolent aristocracy in an arid country”.²

This kind of interpretation seems to have raised several problems. Palmer no doubt attempts to view the Borno “Empire” through the eyes of the British Empire. There was no doubt that British colonial policy was based purely on the exploitation of the economy of the colonized people and as such is not a useful point of reference for our study of the economic history of the Central Sudanic states.

The Seifuwa policy was quite different in that their paramount interest was the incorporation of new peoples into the state and to maintain the stability of the state by the general control and organisation of the economy. Thus the Seifuwa state was more or less a composite unit whose economy was meant for the benefit of its diverse groups of people. In Seifuwa policy the control and security of trade

routes within their spheres of influence and the organization of the market system were the primary considerations. It was the productive effect of an organised economic system that was basic to the success of their authority as a ruling dynasty.

Again in Palmer's interpretation the slave factor in the economy of the state was also emphasized. But slaves as commercial "items" have no strong basis in seifuwa economic history. Many colonial historians seem to have been misled by the accounts of travellers such as Leo Africanus who claimed to have visited Borno in the sixteenth century.³

It is here suggested that the basis of the success of the Seifuwa Mais in Borno depended on the stable economy of the state and the productive capacity of the region which they have occupied. The key to our understanding of the Seifuwa economic history lies in the fact that the state functioned peacefully as a result of the engagement of a larger proportion of the population in productive employment. This marks the major area of contrast with Kanem where the meagre and scarce natural resources led to the struggle for survival among the various groups of people. Dynastic crisis and civil strife which accompanied the Seifuwa rule in Kanem were largely as a result of this economic factor.⁴

This paper aims to examine the basic factors in the economy of Borno under the Seifuwa Mais which gave rise to a stable political system. It was intended to give an outline of those factors that helped the Seifuwa Mais to establish a strong position in the Central Sudan. However, it must be pointed out that it is not possible in a paper of this nature to give the detailed accounts of the Seifuwa economic history. Our attention can be focussed on the Seifuwa economic system in general as the basis for the stability of the state.

In this regard it is intended to examine three main factors which were central to the economic and political system of the state. First, was the effect of the movement of the Seifuwa into Borno on the general structure of the economy. Secondly, the extent and the productive

capacity of the region which was incorporated under the Seifuwa rule to form a convenient economic and political unit. Thirdly, the extent of the government involvement in the economy will be examined.

The re-establishment of the Seifuwa authority in the late fifteenth century in Borno has brought in some fundamental changes in the organisational aspect of commerce in the region west of Lake Chad. In this regard, however, it would be interesting to consider what was the state of the economy of the region which they had occupied prior to their movement into Borno. Although details about the economic organization of the area before the Seifuwa is considerably lacking it is possible to reconstruct at least tentatively from the fragments of culture that had come to light. There was no doubt that the Saus were strenuous agriculturalists and had a well developed culture.⁵ They lived in city states largely along the southern and south-western shores of the Lake Chad. They seemed to have depended to a large extent on the resources of the lake and had developed a well organized fishing industry. Tradition about the Saus also placed great emphasis on nomadic activity and hunting which tends to suggest that there was a great deal of concentration of their population along the shores of the lake and the adjoining rivers. We do know that by the late sixteenth century the Sau Ngafata lived mainly in the region between the Birni Gazargamo and Damasak while the Tatala lived to the south of the Lake Chad from a region between Monguno and Ngala.⁶ The extent of the territory which they had occupied, and which they might have direct control, seems to have been considerably smaller than what the Seifuwa Mais were able to control later in the sixteenth century.

It is in the light of the above that we should try to view what impact the Seifuwa Mais were able to exert by the establishment of their rule in Borno which eventually led to the displacement of the Sau. It seems clear that by the late fifteenth century the Sau were far less superior in their organizational capacity than the Seifuwa who at that stage were very disorganized. The Sau were not strictly speaking

a politically well-organized group at this period as shown by the simple way the Seifuwa were able to take over the authority from them.⁷ The implication of this lack of organization among the Sau was partly their inability to mobilize the economy of this vast region to the benefit of a politically defined group.⁸ We have no evidence that the market organization and growth of regional economy had reached an advanced level under the Sau.

With the coming of the Seifuwa and as a result of the activities of the early rulers some remarkable developments had taken place. For the Seifuwa appeared to have come into Borno as a ruling dynasty with some definite goals and objectives about their role in the control and management of the economy. They came from an economically poor region which was basically the cause for the collapse of their authority. In Borno they had found the solution to many of their problems. Thus when Mai Ali Gaji confidently remarked that he had "found a Kingdom" he meant more than just a place where he could take refuge from the hostile land of Kanem.⁹ In short he also meant that this was a base from where the Seifuwa could extend their influence beyond their territorial limits. It was a base from where they could translate their claim to political authority into reality. These considerations relating to the foundation of a new state had their roots in the strong economic basis of the region.

Demographic Changes.

Perhaps one of the most significant developments which accompanied the Seifuwa into Borno was the considerable rise in population of the region west and south of the Lake Chad. Indeed this population movement from Kanem to Borno had predated the coming of the Seifuwa, and with the Bulala wars and the dynastic conflict in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the movement became more rapid. Finally when Mai Umar Ibn Idris left with all his army and his followers for Kaga the biggest migration seemed to have taken place.¹⁰ Thus as a result of these migrations, which had been continuous process during this crucial period, new

elements such as the Kanembu — Sugurti, and other nomadic groups such as the Yedina and the Shuwa occupied the western and south-western shores of the Lake Chad.¹¹ When however the Mais continued their move along the River Yobe to the site of Birnin Gazargamo more of the Kanembu population moved with them and settled at different points along the River. This gradual but immense rise in population had the effect of changing the structure of settlements of the people. Thus old settlements were replaced by new ones which also grew larger in sizes. With the arrival of the immigrants it was only natural that they would mainly look for the most fertile land to settle down. Thus the traditions of settlements of places like Wudi, Yobe, Ali Gajiri, Gashagar, Duji, Damasak, Difa and several others which seemed to have developed as a result of this population movement placed considerable emphasis on the fertility of the areas.¹² All these settlements were located along the River Yobe and it appears that during the course of the sixteenth century some of these towns had developed into considerable urban centres.

This brings us to the next stage of the development as a result of this population movement — that of urbanization. It appears that towns and villages had increased both in sizes and number in the sixteenth century. One of the biggest urban centres which had developed in the sixteenth century was Birni Gazargamo, which became the centre of political authority and the seat of the Seifuwa government. It is not easy to determine the size and extent of the area covered by the Birni but by the second half of the sixteenth century a chain of settlements and villages seemed to have extended from the walls of the Birni to the present day settlements of Degaltura, Damatar and Garu Kime, an area of roughly one hundred square kilometres.¹³ It could be assumed that a large proportion of the settlers in this region were people associated with the court and an equally large proportion were sedentary agriculturalists — a combination of indigenous inhabitants and the immigrants who came in with the Seifuwa. Also equally difficult to determine was the size of the population of Birni Gazargamo in the sixteenth

century. Tradition in connection with this aspect often carried and exaggerated but fascinating stories in an attempt to give a pictorial view of the city. The first attempt to give an assessment of the size and the population of the Birni was given by Muhammad Salih Ibn Ishak in the seventeenth century.

“At Gazargamo there were six hundred and sixty roads cleared and widened called Le (Lai). Sixty of these roads were well known to the Amir, for he traversed them, but many of the roads were unknown to the Amir since he did not traverse them.”¹⁴

In a rather rough estimate of population Muhammad Salih went on to give the figures for the population of Birni Gazargamo.

“In Gazargamo there were four Friday Mosques. Each of these had an Imam for Friday who led the Friday prayer with the people. At each Mosque there were twelve thousand worshippers.”¹⁵

Although Muhammad Salih's estimate does not appear to have reliable accuracy, taken together with other fragments of information on the Birni it gives us a rough picture of the size of the city. However, the most important point for us in this study was the rise in population as a result of the Seifuwa movement into Borno and the nature of urbanization that had taken place. It is to be assumed that the density of population was much greater in the Birni area than elsewhere in the state. Nevertheless the concentration of population was mainly along the River Yobe and as the population expanded along the river it spread to the countryside and other settlements were founded along the Kumadugu Gana.¹⁶ One clear illustration of such settlements was Jimbam situated on the banks of the Kumadugu Gana in the South-West of Gaidam. Jimbam had the tradition of being settled by immigrants whose original home was near the banks of the River Yobe to the east of the present day Gaidam. It was one of those settlements which had the tradition of a strong link with the Birni and seems to have been one of the military outposts of the Seifuwa in the sixteenth century.¹⁷

Thus population movements led to the emergence of urban centres which gradually developed into very significant market centres. With this gradual but continuous rise in population and the development of urban centres there also followed local industries and crafts such as pottery, weaving, leatherwork, dying etc, which were characteristics of the typical life of Birni Gazargamo.¹⁸ Over a period of time these industries became very well developed and provided employment to a large sector of the sedentary population in the towns. For instance the leatherwork industry became so important in Borno in the second half of the sixteenth century that every year Borno merchants set out with large quantities of best quality leather to the Fezzan where these were exchanged for horses and "the manufactured goods of Europe".¹⁹ Some of the items which were imported included caps, perfumes, armaments, chain mail, swords and firearms.²⁰ Indeed, to provide exchange items for these commodities meant the growth of several other industries.

The next consideration in the economy of the state was territorial — the extent of the land available which could be incorporated into the political system to form a convenient economic unit. The question was whether the extent of land under the authority of the Seifuwa was capable of providing a self contained economy. One significant feature of this region was the absence of strong natural barriers such as mountains and rivers which could restrict the expansion of the boundary of the state. The only natural barrier in the north was the Sahara desert which was at the distance of nearly eighty kilometres from the Birni, and in the south were the Mandara mountains, which were located over two hundred and forty kilometres away from the Birni. To the west the vast plain extended well into Hausaland. To the east the Lake Chad and the Shari provided a convenient natural boundary. This vast area was twenty thousand square kilometres and it incorporated various sub-regions producing different agricultural products.²¹ It also gave the basis for the emergence of strong regional economies.

Fishing.

One very conspicuous feature of this region was the growth of two very extensive commercial centres situated in the eastern and the western extremities linked up by a big trade route running east to west alongside the River Yobe. In the eastern part of this region was the lake Chad basin with highly developed commercial potentialities. The fishing industry on the lake was a well developed commercial enterprise well before the coming of the Seifuwa into Borno.²² Fishing in the lake prior to the movement of the Seifuwa seems to have been the monopoly of an aquatic community — the Yedina — whose long association with the lake had enabled them to build up a highly specialized fishing industry. But with the coming of the Seifuwa a large number of the Kanembu immigrants who had settled along the shores of the Lake also took to fishing and ran the business in competition with the Yedina.²³ The fishing industry included the making of harpoons which was, before the iron age, made of bones and wood. Later with the availability of iron in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these bone harpoons were replaced by those made of iron.²⁴ Towns which had developed along the shores of the lake were Wudi, Burwa, Yawa, Yo, Chesaa, Arege, Kauwa, Moduwari, Monguno and Ngurno.²⁵ The population of these towns seem originally to have grown because of the fishing industry and the largest proportion of the inhabitants — a combination of the Kanembu and the Buduma — were fishermen.

Pastoralism.

There was another great attraction of the Lake Chad which made it a big commercial zone. Along its shores it provided considerable pasture grounds during the dry and the rainy seasons to support large nomadic populations of Kanembu, Shuwa and the Fulani. The two groups of nomads — the Kanembu and the Shuwa — had already made their appearance in the late fifteenth century, while the Fulani seemed to have moved in later in the sixteenth cen-

tury. Pastoralism along the shores of the lake seemed to have been very competitive among the various groups who settled there in the sixteenth century. The nature of the organization of this enterprise determined the degree of the commercial activity going on in the cattle trade. The cattle owners themselves were mostly resident in the towns and the actual nomadic activity was carried out by a different group of people (Sunyia) who were employed by their owners. Nomadism itself was a highly specialized occupation and it required the skills and knowledge of the nomads who could withstand all hardships, hazards, and risks. For this reason nomads themselves were organized often in family units and each had specific areas for grazing their cattle. The Kanembu — Sugurti for instance had a very well organized hierarchy of nomadic leaders who had specific functions and role to play in the success of their occupation.²⁶ Cattle owners needed the support and the services of the nomads and they equally needed the services of the cattle traders who decided the market value of their cattle. These traders often served as agents of the cattle owners and moved along the east-west trade route following the various markets on the River Yobe. There was considerable surplus in cattle in the Lake Chad area which made its value lower in that area than elsewhere in the region. The tendency therefore was that cattle moved from east to west and the biggest markets for cattle were to be found in western Borno, in places such as Nguru Ngilewa, Maja Kawun and Mayori, Machina Kabshari, Kabi²⁷ etc. The market value of cattle became higher as the traders moved from the east to the west. Thus the cattle trade in itself was a very productive occupation which supported a large percentage of the population living in Borno.

In addition to the fishing and cattle trade on the shores of the lake there was also a considerable trade going on in natron (Kelbu) and salt which were left as deposits after the level of the lake had subsided. Natron and salt production were carried out in commercial quantities by the sedentary Kanembu and Buduma. In fact the two settlements of

Kauwa and Moduwari on the southern shores of the lake owed their growth partly to this important commodity.²⁸

The foregoing description is meant to give the picture of the Lake Chad area as a very productive commercial zone which supported a large population — both sedentary and nomadic. It was also one of the key areas at to which the Seifuwa government directed most of its attention.

Trade Routes.

In view of its very significant commercial role the Lake Chad area became a meeting point of four principal trade routes which linked up with other international market centres in the Central Sudan, Northern Africa, Egypt and the Hausaland. The first of these routes was the Borno Kavar — Tripoli trade route, the famous northern route which passed through the Bilma salt mines to the Mediterranean. This was the main trade route followed by the Tubo and the Waseli. The terminus markets for this route along the Chad basin were Mao, Ngegimi, Wudi, Garumle, Burwa, Yo and Yawa and from there the route branched to several other smaller markets.²⁹ Then there was another trade route to the south of the Lake which followed along the River Shari to the Makari towns of Kamako, Logone and Afade.³⁰ This route was followed mainly by elephant hunters and was the principle route for ivory. Another route from the Lake Chad region passed through the Bahr-al-Gazal to the Sudan and Egypt. This was the main route followed by the pilgrims annually and it was also the famous route which linked Borno with the states of Waday and Darfur. The other principle route was of course the east-west trade route which passed through the capital — Birni Gazargamo — to the market of western Borno and thence into Hausaland. These four major trade routes all converged on the Lake Chad area to make the region an important commercial zone.

The second region in the state which was economically productive was the western territory of the kingdom occupied by the Bede and the Manga. The main attraction in this area was not the presence of a lake but because it was a region where several trading groups from different areas had settled down, as early as the sixteenth century. The area extended roughly from the present site of Yusufari to Bade Guna, Nguru, Machina and Birnin Ngafata in the north-west. The principal inhabitants in the area in the sixteenth century were the Ngizim, Bade, Fulani, and the Hausawa.³¹ Also it appears that a small population of the desert communities such as the Tuaregs and Dageras and North Africans — the Wasili-lived in various towns of this region.

There were two major characteristics of western Borno which made it commercially productive area. First was the presence of immense natron deposits which were found along the belt stretching from Gudimuni to Yamia³². The natron produced in this region, in addition to several other uses were mainly used to feed the large number of cattle which came from the Lake Chad area. Natron production had been the monopoly of the Manga people but also other groups such as the Tuaregs and the Dagera appeared to have been occasionally involved. The production of this commodity also gave rise to other industries in the area such as pottery. Secondly to the south of this natron belt the area supported a large number of sedentary agricultural population such as the Bade and the Ngizim who lived along the Western portion of the River Yobe. Indeed the area occupied by the Bade to-day was covered with numerous lagoons and tributaries of the River Yobe and the Komadugu Gana which was very favourable for the cultivation of various categories of cereals.³³

Thirdly, like the eastern part of the kingdom this region was a meeting point of several trade routes which linked it with other international market centres. There was another trans-Saharan route which linked this area with Agadez — through the Kelle — Tanout route. This same route also

branched from Kelle to the Tervitz mountain to link up with the Kavar — Tripoli (or the eastern) route. The second route was the extension of the east-west trade route which linked up with the big markets of Hausaland such as Kano and Katsina. The northern route was mainly followed by the Tuaregs and the Dagera while the western route was followed mainly by the Hausas and the Kanuri. Due to the attraction of various trading groups in this region several market towns such as Nguru, Birni Ngafata, Mayori, Maja Kawuri, Kabshari, and Yamia seemed to have emerged.³⁴

Thus it could be seen that the two major regions in the eastern and western part of the kingdom had very significant role to play in the economy of the state. These two zones were linked up by the River Yobe and the Komadugu Gana which also formed the major trade route from the east to the west. Because the largest movement of the people from the east to the west consisted of the cattle traders the River Yobe formed a very convenient natural route.

The State and the Economy.

In considering the degree of the government involvement in the economy of the state it is perhaps necessary to point out the strategic location of Birni Gazargamo which became the centre of political authority. The Birni was situated in between the two major commercial centres of the state and had a direct and easy access to both areas through East-West trade route. It was a big market centre itself and this main route passed through the city to connect the two regions.

As a result of the economic viability of this region and the nature of the commercial activity that had developed, the Seifuwa system of government was based substantially on the control of the land, the market system and the trade route. Thus in the context of the political system of the state the Mai was "the owner of the land" (*Kema Lardema*).³⁵ Any piece of land which was acquired by the process of conquest or submission belonged to him. A centrally

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controlled system of distribution of land as fiefs was established with the government officials exercising supervisory powers. They were responsible for the control of the land resources — which were basically agricultural — for the benefit of the government. The senior fief holders — the *Chima Kura* — were normally resident in the capital. They were the members of the royal family, (*mairiwu*) the Mai's Council *Majlis* and the *Kaunawa* (executives). They were represented in their respective fiefs by subordinate officers known as the *Chima Gana*. They exercised political authority in their territories and often performed judicial functions at the local level. State officers charged with the administration of the land were absolutely dependent on the Mai as the Mai, reserved the overall powers of control over them. Nevertheless they often commanded tremendous influence and power over the territories they administered. The *Chimas* seem to have extended the authority of the government to the local inhabitants of the territories through the local heads — the *Bulama* and the *Maruma*. These were chosen on the basis of their acceptability to the local people, but also often imposed by the *Chimas*. The revenue derived from the farm products were known as the *Cidiram* and seems to have been a general form of taxation imposed on the peasantry.³⁷ Although a substantial amount of this went to the Mai's treasury where the surplus was put into the market through indirect means, the *Chimas* also obtained large share out of what they had collected. Cereals were important items of exchange in the markets particularly for the commodities which came through the desert routes. Although our knowledge of the distributive system is limited one could assume with some confidence that some recognized agents of the government handled the commercial transactions in the market on behalf of the government.³⁸

It must be noted that the *Chimas* apart from the income they derived from the general land tax also benefited from the produce of their private farms in the fiefs allocated to them. They used both communal and slave labour for the

cultivation of these private farms. In the communal labour (*surwa*) the *Chimas* used the services of their dependents and house servants (*waladia*). The *Chimas* who were sufficiently capable of owning slaves often organized them as working parties and settled them on their farms in distant or remote parts of the land under their control. Indeed, some of these slave settlements (*Kaliari*) have survived to the present day in Borno.³⁹ It must however be noted that what was produced on the private farms of the *Chimas* were in addition to what the *Chimas* collected as their share of the *idiram* — the land tax. With regards to the peasantry the cultivation of the land was done almost entirely at the family level for this section of the society hardly possessed the ability to own slaves.⁴⁰ Nevertheless the overall annual agricultural yield by the peasantry through their direct labour could not be compared in volume to what was produced through slave labour. The latter was minimal, although it could often be a substantial increase on the surplus produced throughout the state.

The government's major role in the general economy of the state was the organization of the market system to facilitate successful commercial transactions among the various groups in the state. Government was not, as it may be assumed, entirely devoted to profit making through its own commercial involvement. It has earlier been mentioned that one of the most important trade routes which cut across the whole length of the state was the east-west trade route which linked the markets of western Borno to those of the eastern part of the kingdom. It is not clear when these major commercial zones attained their economic importance which had continued up to the nineteenth century. The east-west trade route seems to have been functioning at a considerable scale for a very long time. One could assume that Mai Idris Alouma's campaigns to suppress the Binawa-Ngizim, and the Bade, who disrupted the flow of communication along the route was an indication of how important this area had been for the government economically. It has been suggested that the economic importance of

western Borno would have been a major factor in the establishment of the office of the Galadima as the representative of the government in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴¹ Similarly it could be considered that the establishment of the office of the Khalifa of Kanem in the east, in about the same time as the Galadima, was partly as a result of the continued disruption of trade due to the conflicts with the Bulala.

The successful function of the market centres was considered to be a primary objective of the government. These markets were a meeting point for diverse groups of people with varying economic interests. Obviously the government seems to have paid great attention to the welfare and security of traders particularly those involved in the trans-Saharan trade. In view of the complex exchange methods involved between trans-saharan and indigenous merchants it became necessary for some organizational process to be introduced into the market system at the state level. It was in view of this need that the Mais appointed a government official — the Zanna Arjinoma to take charge of the welfare of the traders who came from North Africa.⁴² The North African traders who were mainly Arabs were known in Borno as *Wasiliva* (sing : *Wasili*). These traders were often regarded as the guests of the state and were accommodated in the capital and elsewhere in quarters reserved for them known as the *Wasiliram*. In the capital, Gazargamo, it seems that all transactions on behalf of the state with them were conducted through the Zanna Arjinoma.

However, the nature of government involvement in commerce in the capital was bound to differ to some extent with its involvement in the other market centres in the state. It appears that in most of these centres some form of organization and control at the state level were introduced. The traders particularly coming from the north were accommodated in separate quarters known as the Jongo. The basic formation and function of the Jongo were essentially commercial. It was a place where foreign and indigenous traders met to negotiate on the values of their commodities,

and often get uniform prices fixed for all major items. The head of the Jongo was known as the Jongoma appointed with the authority of the government. Although the position was considered to be hereditary it appears that in view of the specialized nature of the functions it was often considered on merit.⁵⁵ Although the Jongoma's function was that of a chief intermediary between indigenous and foreign merchants, his attention seems to have been drawn more towards the latter. Nevertheless it was his duty to establish a strong commercial relations between the two groups of traders and control prices of the commodities that came into the market. For instance one of the major functions of the Jongoma of the Maja Kawuri in western Borno in the nineteenth century was to control the flow of cattle which came along the River Yobe into the market.⁴³ In this task he was assisted by some officials who relayed messages to the market along the route alerting cattle traders that there was surplus cattle in Maja Kawuri and that the value of their cattle was likely to fall considerably.⁴⁴ This measure was very significant indeed since it helped to control prices without detriment to either side and to the long term economic stability of the state.

The Jongomas also seem to have performed judicial functions in matters relating to the markets. It is not clear what set of laws were administered in these markets but certainly the penalties ranged from deprivation of marketing rights, fines and possibly imprisonment at the higher level. The Jongomas collected some form of taxes from the traders the most important of which were the *Kasuuram* (for the use of market facilities) and the *fuuto* (custom dues) collected at each point of entry of the different markets.⁴⁵

The Jongoma's main agents were the *Dilalmazwa* (sing: *dilalma*) who were the middlemen between the indigenous and foreign traders. Indeed judging from the role of these middlemen it could be noted that they played the most central role in the control of prices in the markets. First they negotiated for the wholesale values of the commodities and sold them to the retailers at a price

which they fixed among themselves. For this reason there seems to have been some coordination among the *Dilalmawa* to ensure an even valuation of the commodities. No doubt, therefore, the system as it operated was likely to be open to many abuses in the hands of some unscrupulous middlemen. But this was the area where the Jongoma's authority to safeguard the interests of all the parties involved would be applied.

The main safeguard measures employed by the government to check any misuse of authority by the Jongoma and his agents was to appoint heads or supervisors for each profession, trade or section in the market who were directly responsible to a head of the market — the *Mala Kasuube* — whose function was much more elaborate than that of the Jongoma.⁴⁶ Some of the heads of the various divisions in the market were the *Mala Fatkemabe* (head of the petty traders) *Mala Kaalmabe* (head of the black-smiths) *Mala Sumuribe* (head of the butchers) etc. The *Mala Kasuube* himself, though the head of the market, did not seem to have interfered directly in the details of transactions among the various traders.⁴⁷

In conclusion, one can say that this elaborate system of market administration was no doubt introduced by the government to safeguard the commercial interests of the state in general. The degree of the success of the system varied according to the times and the circumstances. But the survival of the state depended to a considerable extent on the successful operation of the system. The issue of slave raids and slave trade which appeared to have dominated the trend of thinking of many scholars is peripheral to the study of the economic factor in the history of Borno under the Seifuwa.

R E F E R E N C E S

1. A detailed account of the Mune is contained in the second chapter of *the Idara fi Niziam al-Mamlaka wal-Imara* (unpubsished). Also some discussion on the Mune is contained in Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, "Kanem Wars," *Sudanese Memoirs* Lagos, 1928, p. 123, 124, 125.
2. *Gazetteer of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria* Vol. II p. 19.
3. Leo Africanus : *Description de l'Afrique*, Paris 1956, Vol. II P. 476 — 480.
4. Leo in his account claimed to have visited Borno and stayed there for one month. His description of the land and people of Borno in the sixteenth century raises serious doubts as to whether he had ever visited Borno.
5. Al-Umari's account of Kanem in the early fourteenth century brings this fact out to a greater extent. Having been situated in an environment exposed to the gradual but steady dessiccation of the Sahara, Kanem was never a suitable environment for the sedentary Kanembu population. For al-Umari's account see his *Masalik al-absar fi mamalik al-amsar* MS No. 5868, in Bibliotheque Nationale Paris.
6. Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua's account of how mai Idris Aloma subdued the Sau shows this very clearly. Mai Idris had to resort to the destruction of their crops during the rainy season. The legends of the Sau also place emphasis on their well developed culture.
7. Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, the *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Aloma*, Lagos, 1926, p.48.
8. The detailed reference to the legend of the Sau is contained in an unpublished source *Kitab-al-Borno* by Ali ibn Al-Hajj which mentions of some correspondence between Mai Ali Gaji and the Sau on the question of settlement. See Appendix IV of M. N. Alkali, *Kanem - Borno under the Sayfawa*, Ph.D., ABU 1978 (unpublished).
9. This is shown in the simple way the Seifuwa were able to establish their position of dominance in Borno. There was virtually no significant resistance from the Sau against the Seifuwa.
10. See the Mahram of Mai Ali Gaji Dunamani in Palmer *Sudanese Memoirs*, III, pp. 22.
11. The Diwan of the Sultans of Bornu, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1852. Translations exist in Palmer's *Bornu Sahara and Sudan* (BSS). Also on this process of movement see Sheriff Ibrahim Salih, *Tarikh al-Arab wal-Islam fil Imbratwyrat Kanem-Borno-Khartoum*, 1970 p. 73.
12. The migration of the Kanembu — Sugurti is given in some detail in Lawan Maduwi's account. The Yedina were the Buduma, the aquatic population of Lake Chad.
13. Most of these towns are mentioned in the extensive account of Imam Ahmad's *First Twelve years*, op.cit : See *Sudanese Memoir* Vol. III p.28.
14. It is difficult to say that the Birni extended that far. But the evidence of intense urbanization around Birni Gazargamo was quite apparent. In the present day settlement of Degaltura, Damatar and Garu Kime the Birni type burnt bricks were recently discovered.
15. Account of Gazargamo written by Muhammad Saleh b. Isharqu in c 1658/59 (*Bulletin SOAS.*; LONDON, V. 1929, p.544 — 7 and 552 — 3).
16. Muhammad Salih, *ibid.*
17. For instance towns such as Gumsa, Jimbam, Damatur, Balle.
18. Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, *First Twelve, Years op. cit.* p. 19.
19. The evidence for a well developed pottery industry is shown by the huge mounds near the site of the old palace at Gamboru about three miles east of Birni Gazargamo.
20. Giovanni Lorenzo d'Anania, *L'Univarsale Fabrica del Mondo Overo Cosmografia* (1582 Trattaro Terzo) p. 349 — 50)
21. *Ibid.*

21. This plain can be divided into two major zones — the *Virgi* (or clay soil) where the *Ngabuli* (Sorghum) is extensively cultivated, and the *Chesa* — (the sandy soil) where guinea corn, groundnuts and many other similar crops are cultivated annually. The first zone is the area where the present Chad-Basin project is located.
22. Recent studies in archaeology brings out this fact clearly. See Graham Connah, Progress Report on Archaeological work in Bornu 1964 — 66 in the *Second Interim Report, Northern History Research Scheme*, April 1967.
23. This accounts for the large scale involvement of the Kanembu in the fishing industry today. Lawan Maduwi's account on the Kanembu also stresses this point.
24. Graham Connah, *op.cit.*
25. Most of these settlements survive to the present day.
26. Lawan Maduwi's account.
27. These were major settlement of the Manga. Nguru Ngilewa was the capital of the Galadimas while Maja Kawuri and Mayori were important markets for cattle and administered by the Jongomas.
28. These two towns were the main concentration areas for the Kanembu — Sugurti and known as *turin* settlements.
29. Wudi is also known as Abadam. Mao which is to-day a big market in Kanem was mentioned by Imam Ahmad, *Kanem Wars of Mai Idris Aloma* in Palmer Sudanese Memoirs p.15, 16, 18, 44, 70, 98, 99, 119. For Garumele see A. D. H. Bivar and P. L. Shinnie, "Old Kanuri Capitals." in *Papers in African Prehistory*, Cambridge, 1970 p. 292 — 293.
30. Kamako or Quamako according to Giovanni Lorenzo D'Anania was a principal iron industry of the Central Sudan. See D'Anania, *op. cit.*
31. Imam Ahmad, in his account of the *First Twelve Years* (p.39) makes a mention of the Binawa Ngizini. The Bade were also gradually establishing themselves in this area about the sixteenth century.
32. Gudimuni is situated West of Gure the Capital of Muniyo while Yamia was the old name for Maine Soroa in the north of Gaidam.
33. The area is very well known for the cultivation of rice.
34. For Kabshari also see H. Barth *Travels and Discoveries III* p. 38. The town was later to be known as Alaune. Kabi was one of the Tubu settlements in the north of the present Yusufari. Birnin Ngafata, a walled city was established before Gure, the Capital of Munuio — see Landeroin, *Document Scientifique de la Mission Tilho* p. 403 — 406
35. This is as much as it applies to his powers to allocate ownership of land to the people. In reality he was expected to be the custodian of the land, its protector, and responsible for the use to which it was put.
36. For detailed account on this see chapter V of this book, below.
37. Each farmer was expected to pay a certain proportion of his farm produce as the *Gidiram* to the Mai's treasury.
38. This indication is given by the appointment of an officer in charge of trade the Zanna Arjinoma, by the Seifuwa government.
39. For instance, the Kaliari settlement in the present Dapchi District has one of the oldest tradition.
40. Ownership of slaves was the exclusive preserve of the ruling class.
41. For an account of the establishment of the office of the Galadima See M. N. Alkali, *Kanem-Borno under the Sayfawa*, A.B.U. PhD, 1978 p. 329 — 336, and Chapter VII below.
42. *Ibid.* p. 124.
43. Interviews with Jongoma Suntal of Nguru.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*

46. The Mala Kasuube, unlike the Jongoma, was not necessarily a trader. He could be a member of the Mai's Court and functioned as a liaison officer between the Court and the Market.
47. We cannot easily generalize on this issue. Strictly speaking it depends largely on the period and the personalities involved. At certain times when the Mais were personally involved in commerce and trade the *Mala Kasuube* had tremendous amount of power and influence.

THE REVENUE SYSTEM OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF BORNO IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

by

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One of the major pre-requisites for a broader and more meaningful reconstruction of the structures and processes of Sudanese societies is an understanding of the forces governing interaction between the rulers and the ruled. And, basic to those forces of interaction is the way in which governmental revenue was extracted and allocated. I need to emphasise here that internal revenue formed the mainstay of the Sudanese governments, and therefore whatever gains they derived from external commerce, served merely in augmenting what the governments derived from the systematic tapping of their internal resources, in the form of taxation which included regular as well as irregular dues. This paper attempts a preliminary investigation into the system of taxation in nineteenth century Borno — under the Kanemi Shehus. The government of the Shehus was, at least, supposedly, an Islamic government; and as such, its ideals were already laid down by the *Shari'a*. Thus, the extent to which the extraction and allocation of revenue were in conformity with the sanctions of the *Shari'a* are the basic issues that this paper seeks to highlight. By portraying the close interaction between the political, social and economic systems, the paper also hopes to establish a broader perspective of the state of society in nineteenth century Borno. As to how the nineteenth century system of taxation differed from that of the earlier centuries — under the Seifuwa — no attempt at comparison is being made here owing to the paucity of information on the Seifuwa system. However, since the whole question of taxation was tied up with administrative machinery, the paper will start off by taking a cursory look at the administrative system in Borno in the period under consideration

The System of Administration.

Traditionally, ownership of land in Borno was vested in the state which, in the absence of such a notion as 'popular-sovereignty,' was solely represented by the monarch — the Shehu — as was the case in the period under consideration. This system of land tenure formed the basis of the system of state administration and to a large extent, the land tenure system was also reflected upon the system of taxation.

As all land belonged to the Shehu, he wielded the power of parcelling out the territories into fiefs which were placed under the control of fiefholders (Kanuri — *Chima Kura*). The allocation of fiefs was fundamentally devised as a means of remunerating the key government functionaries. However, since the Shehu was also required, by obligation, to cater for the members of the royal family, some of them were also enfeoffed by way of providing them with a relatively independent means of subsistence.

The *Chima Kura* did not reside in his fief, though occasionally he maintained a house there and visited it, but was ordinarily in residence at the capital, unless he were a garrison commander, in which case, he resided in his garrison headquarters. In size, the fiefs varied greatly, from a tract of country several square miles to a single village. Moreover, a *Chima* frequently had fiefs belonging to him in different parts of the state; he might control a village or villages in the middle of a fief belonging to another *Chima*.

Our knowledge of Seifuwa administration in Borno is so scanty that we cannot even hazard, nor is there the need here, to make a comparative analysis of Seifuwa administration vis-a-vis the Kanemi's. It may be of interest to note however that, whereas under the Seifuwa, succession to fiefs had been based on the hereditary principle, such a principle was more often than not discounted by the Kanemi Shehu. Under the Kanemi dynasty, the *Chima* held their fiefs simply at the pleasure of the reigning Shehu, and such holdings were liable to sequestration (in whole or part) and re-allocation on the slightest pretexts.¹ Thus, an *Abba* (Prince), a *Kachalla* (a military captain of servile origin)

and a freeborn *Koguma* (courtier) were to be found following each other in succession as the holders of a single fief. And 'with or without change in the holder of the fief, the size of the fief was also liable to change — with towns in an original fief being taken away and given to another fief holder.²

Since the *Chima Kura* (with the exception of the garrison commanders) was resident in the capital, Kukawa, he had to, as a rule, appoint one or more subordinates (*Chima Gana*) to look after a town or group of towns in his holding. The *Chima Gana* was thus an on-the-spot agent of the *Chima Kura* and might be his slave or freeborn client. In him (the *Chima Gana*) was vested practically absolute authority of representing his superior in all matters relating to the town or towns under his control. In essence, the *Chima Gana* was supposed to share authority with the *Bulama* (the indigenous authority of a village unit). Not infrequently however, the existence of such a dual structure in a single fief was a source of friction between the *Chima Gana* and the *Bulama*, especially where the latter happened to wield greater influence among the subject population. In any case, the fact that the *Chima Gana* had a direct access to and influence over the *Chima Kura*, did serve to limit the extent to which a *Bulama* could afford to contest the authority of the *Chima Gana*. The *Bulama* was therefore, by and large, subordinated to the *Chima*. The *Chima Gana* supervised the *Bulama's* day-to-day administration of his village unit, but the primary function of the *Chima Gana* was to collect, with the assistance of the *Bulama*, all taxes and dues accruing to the government in Kukawa. Against this background of the system of state administration, the chapter will now proceed to examine the sources of governmental revenue.

The Sada'a.

Basic to the multiplicity of taxes and dues in the Bornoan system of taxation was the Islamic *Zakkat*, which in Borno was termed *Sada'a*. As a canonical tax backed up by the sanctions of the Shari'a, the *Zakkat* or *Sada'a*, as an income

tax, was obligatory on all Muslims. In theory, the *Zakkat* was to be levied on an individual's *Zahir* possessions (i.e. the visible articles, such as farm produce and cattle) by an official assessor on his own observation; while the *batin* possessions (i.e. the "hidden" articles, such as liquid cash and merchandise) were to be expressly free from any official assessment, and the *Zakkat* on them was to be entirely left to the conscience of the individual.³ It may be noted however that "actual practices differed considerably from the theory of the *Zakkat* in the different Muslim countries."⁴ And, in the Bornoan case, the collection of the *Sada'a* was restricted to *Zahir* possessions and more specifically to farm produce; so much so that it degenerated to nothing more than a grain tax. And thus, its burdens were by implication limited to the peasantry. This accounts for the fact that the *jangali* — the *Zakkat* or tax on livestock "had been unheard of" (as a regular tax) in Borno until the inception of British colonial rule.⁵ It appears however that the Fulani living on the western and southern frontiers of Borno did pay the *jangali*, although irregularly, and then only to a visiting representative of the Sokoto Caliphate.⁶ Compelled by the need for fresh pasture lands, the Fulani who had fled Borno in the course of the jihad began to return from the 1840s onwards.⁷ But the new immigrants did not consider themselves as unequivocal subjects of the Borno government.⁸ By paying the *jangali* to the Sokoto Caliphate, the Fulani thus maintained their allegiance to that political entity. With the Borno government they worked out a *modus vivendi* whereby they paid the *sheede hudo* (grass money) annually, in return for grazing rights.⁹ The dues from the Fulani were collected for the government by the various garrison commanders (Kachalla) on the western and southern frontiers.¹⁰ In fact the *Kasasairam* collected from the other nomadic groups of Borno was a grazing fee and therefore identical with the *sheede hudo* paid by the Fulani. But then the grazing fee was essentially a secular tax and the non-enforcement of the religious *Zakkat* on cattle must be seen as a gross error of

omission and a deviation from the *Shari'a* on the part of the Borno government. Before the advent of Rabeh (1893), the only known incidence of *jangali* on cattle took place in 1865, when Laminu Njitiya in his capacity as the *Chima Jilibé* (tribal representative) of the Kwalme Shuwa collected one cattle out of every ten from each of his cattle-owning clients for the government.¹¹ It may however be postulated that the year 1865 might have been a lean year in Borno and in the circumstances, the government would have been forced to invoke its legitimate right to the collection of the *jangali* to solve its immediate economic problems. As to why the *jangali* — in the form of a canonical tax — was not instituted in Borno, no satisfactory explanation can be offered here. It must however be stated categorically that under no circumstances could an Islamic government legitimately immunise its Muslim subjects or a section thereof from fulfilling their religious obligations. It therefore follows that if the Borno government's non-enforcement of the *jangali* on the Shuwa and Kenembu nomads was based on the privileged status of these two groups, this must have been in violation of the rules laid down by the *Shari'a*. In any case since the *jangali* was neither imposed on the other nomadic groups such as the Badawai and the Kwayam, its non-enforcement on the Shuwa and Kanembu cannot be adequately explained in terms of their alleged privileged status. As stated earlier, the non-enforcement of the *jangali* on the part of the Borno government was a gross error of omission, and is contrary to both the government's economic interest as well as the religious obligations of its nomadic Muslim subjects. Whether the individual nomads were aware of this obligation and exercised their voluntary initiatives to fulfil the obligation by such means as giving away the amount due as *Zakkat* in the form of alms to the poor, is neither known, nor is it material to the central thesis of this paper.

As noted earlier, the *Zakkat* or *Sada'a* in nineteenth century Bornu was, to all intents and purposes, a grain tax, the burden of which was, in effect, borne almost exclusively

by the agricultural peasantry. The *Sada'a* was collected on territorial basis only in so far as each fief constituted a separate unit for collection. In each fief, the authorised collector was the *Chima Gana* and the *Bulama* merely assisted the official collector. But then, under normal circumstances, the collection of the *Sada'a* did not pose problems or difficulties. The religious obligation to pay the *Sada'a* was generally recognised by the peasantry and hence they voluntarily paid in the amount due on their harvests. The rate — i.e. one tenth of the gross harvest — was in fact considered by the individual peasant as "haram" to himself (for either sale or consumption) and this no doubt rendered any question of individual assessment by the official collector unnecessary. Thus, so long as the collection was in conformity with the tenets of the *Shari'a*, the peasantry remained loyal to the regime of the *Sada'a*. However, the avarice of individual officials, or even the government, sometimes gave rise to abuses in the collection of the *Sada'a*. And, on such occasions, when the peasantry felt over-burdened, they resorted to concealing their actual harvests, as a manifestation of their withdrawal of loyalty against the existing political order. A case in point was the obnoxious *Kumoreji* ("splitting of the calabash") introduced by Shehu Bukar in 1883.¹³ The *Kumoreji* was the appropriation (in half) of the wealth of the peasantry not only in grains but in cattle and horses as well. Although the *Kumoreji* was designed ostensibly to punish the populace for not adequately supporting the Shehu during his military expedition against the Marghi of Mulwai, it must be acknowledged that the extortionate nature of the imposition indicates the great pressure being exerted at that time by general economic conditions.¹⁴ The *Kumoreji* was, therefore, an extreme measure to remedy a desperate economic situation; and by default, the *Sada'a* assumed a secular character. In the circumstances, therefore, the only recourse open to the peasantry was to conceal their wealth. The peasantry took to harvesting their crops in the dead of the night and storing clandestinely, the greater part of the yield before the break of daylight. But the peasantry

took such counter measures only at the dire risk of forfeiting the whole of their hidden property as, once the *Chima Gana* discovered a peasant's hidden wealth, he summarily impounded the whole of it; and the aggrieved could nowhere obtain redress. In some fiefs, the more avaricious *chima* actually appropriated more than a half of an individual peasant's wealth; and where the peasant failed to meet the demands of the assessor, the latter went to the extent of holding the peasant's children and wives, or even the peasant himself for ransom. The year of the *Kumoreji* thus left a bitter experience in the minds of the peasantry. And, although the government was enabled, by that extortionate means, to overcome its immediate economic problems, its more lasting effect was to create a serious breach in the relationship between the peasantry and their rulers. The *Kumoreji* was applied in the harvest months (October to December) of 1883 and the sudden death of Bukar, six months after the introduction of the *Kumoreji* (according to oral testimonies) was hence considered by the peasantry as Allah's retributive justice in answer to their prayers. That the *Kumoreji* was never again applied, in spite of subsequent and more or less continuous economic hardships to which the government was subjected, must also be considered as a measure of the peasantry's reaction to the 1883 incidence.

However, but for the singular incidence of the *Kumoreji*, the *Shari'a Ushr* or one tenth (tithe) of an individual's holding was recognised all over Borno as the official rate in the collection of the *Sada'a*. In its strictly Bornoan theory (as distinct from the general Islamic theory of the *Zakkat*), the *Sada'a* was the exclusive property of the Shehu; and thus the collectors were not entitled to any share. In practice however, the *Chima Gana* and the *Bulama* invariably colluded and diverted a substantial part of the collection to their own use. The collections from fiefs that were far removed from the capital were stored in the locality to be later distributed to certain individuals or groups, and thereafter the remainder was either requisitioned by the Shehu, or it was sold and the cash value sent to him, according to his directives. In general

however, the various *Chima Gana* remitted their collections to their respective *Chima Kura* resident in the capital, and the latter, after helping himself generously forwarded what remained as an aggregate collection from his various fiefs. Thus, although the collection from the *Sada'a* was the sole prerogative of the Shehu, the actual income from it that ultimately accrued to the coffers of the Shehu was but always a small fraction of the actual yield. In any case, this type of mis-management and deviation from the standard Islamic formula in the administration of the *Sada'a* (or rather, the *Zakkat* in its general Islamic context), was not peculiar to Borno. It is known that it was also the common practice in many other Islamic states for the collectors of the *Zakkat* to enrich themselves by the illegal means of diverting a portion to their own use.¹⁵ The discrepancy between the Islamic theory of the *Zakkat*, and its actual application in Borno will again be touched upon later on. Suffice it to state emphatically at this juncture however, that in spite of all such discrepancies, the religious obligation to pay the *Sada'a* was, in general, never lost on the peasantry.

Hakki Binimram.

As the *Sada'a* was recognised as a religious tax, so was the *Hakki Binimram* recognised distinctively as a secular tax. The idea of obligation was however inherent in both taxes. While the obligation to pay the *Sada'a* was derived from a Koranic injunction¹⁶ and has thus the force of divine law, the obligation to pay the *Hakki Binimram* was based on a notion of mutual contract between the government and the governed. The very word "*Hakki*" (Kanuri — tax or due) is in fact derived from the Arabic root "*Haqq*" denoting obligation, which again as a generic term is also applicable to all categories of tax. In the Bornoan usage however, the "*Hakki*" was a referent to a specific secular tax, the payment of which fell due in 'winter' (Kanuri—Binim) and thus designated as *Hakki Binimram* or "Winter Tax". The Shehu, by a sort of theoretical contractual arrangement was entitled to collect the *Hakki* in return for his protection

of the subject population against invaders, from without, as well as all forms of molestation from within. This type of contract however, had a character of permanence, and as such its continued existence was not determined entirely by the mutual fulfilment of obligations by the contracting parties. Thus, even on occasions when the ruler was conspicuously failing in his own obligations, the subject population were obliged to adhere to the contract by paying the *Hakki*. Conversely, the breach of the contract by a territorial group was invariably construed as an act of rebellion and thus gave cause for a punitive expedition against such a group.

As a secular tax, the *Hakki* is often erroneously equated with the Islamic "*Kharaj*". But the "*Kharaj*" in its classical application (as distinct from its latter-day usage as a general term for "tax") was essentially a land tax.¹⁷ The *Hakki* in Borno, on the other hand was to all intents and purposes, a general income tax and as such, its secular obligation was incumbent on all individual subjects, irrespective of their source of income. There were however exemptions. The *Mallamtis* (Mallams' towns) were as a rule exempted from all forms of secular levies, and to that end, each of such settlements was granted a *Mahram* (certificate of immunity). The dependants (including slaves) of the principal office holders of the Kukawa court were likewise recognised as *Marram* i. e. exempted from secular levies; and it was by this arrangement that the *Kariaris* (slave settlements) owned by the various principal office holders and scattered all over the state were immunised against taxation.

The *Hakki Binimram* was generally paid in cash — *wuri* (cowries), *gabaga* (hand-woven cloth) or *gursu* (Maria Theresa dollars)—at a more or less equitable rate in any given geographical area. The rates however also varied from area to area and such variations were determined by respective differences in economic prosperity. However, an individual assessment was less the concern of the central administration than that of the various *Chima Gana* who functioned as collecting agents. For, in practice, the fiefholder received

from the Shehu a blanket assessment in dollars or cowries on each of his fiefs, with due consideration, of course, for differences in their respective human and material resources. The *Chima Kura* in turn summoned his subordinates, the *Chima Gana*, and after inflating the original figures for each fief, to ensure his personal aggrandisement, he then passed down to them his own assessment on the respective fiefs. As it was the lot of the *Chima Gana* to harvest the assessment, he with the assistance of all the *Bulama* under him worked out the individual assessments. The assessments were as a rule, divided into three categories: the wealthy, middling and poor. The *Misakin* (the physically disabled—such as lepers and the blind) were as a rule exempted, and even among the able-bodied, the authentically indigent had their taxes mitigated by being commuted into such services as carrying the proceeds of the *Sada'a* and/or the *Hakki* to the capital, or even supplying certain labour services for the personal benefits of the collectors.

To return to the actual collection of the *Hakki*, it must be pointed out that in categorising the tax-payers, the *Chima Gana* had a free exercise of his own discretion, and this fact alone was sufficient enough to sustain his awesome influence over the subject population. And, as might be expected, the *Chima Gana* and the *Bulama* always ensured that the actual yield was more than the sum assigned by the *Chima Kura*, and any such excess was duly recognised as the perquisite of the collectors. It must not, however, be assumed that the collectors had anything as a freehand for personal aggrandisement. The *Chima Gana* in fact had to temper his avarice with moderation; otherwise, the subject population would react by exercising their right of emigration to fiefs with more tolerable exactions. And in-as-much as such a reaction would have been against the better interests of the *Chima Kura*, the *Chima Gana* could only afford to alienate the subject population at the certain risk of losing his own office.

Kaleram and Toloram.

These, unlike the *Hakki* and the *Sada'a*, were in character more of fees than regular taxes. Moreover, their payment, fell due at the beginning of the rainy season rather than at harvest time. The two fees — *Kaleram* and *Toloram* were in fact both referents to a single type of fee and their only difference was dictated merely by differing methods of farming according to geographical variations. Thus, in the *firki* regions, lying to the south-east of the Chad, where a peculiar method of cultivation was (and still is) carried out in the muddy terrain (*tolo*), the fee was known as *Toloram*. Elsewhere throughout Borno where the soil was looser and farming was based on the common practice of shifting cultivation, it was known as *Kaleram*, meaning literally, "hoe-blade fee."

All land in Borno, as noted earlier, belonged to the Shehu. Thus, the *Kaleram* or its variant, *Toloram*, was a fee whereby the peasant farmers obtained an indirect and theoretical permission of the sovereign, via the *Chima Gana* to till the land. The fee was, however, charged on individual households rather than on the farms. Moreover, as the fee was a fixed one it was thus paid at a uniform rate, irrespective of the number and sizes of farms belonging to a household. There were probably some slight regional variations in the rate, but the rate of one dollar per household was generally recognised as the standard fee. As a rule, the *Kaleram* or *Toloram* was to be paid in hard currency — the Maria Theresa dollar — but in certain exceptional situations the collectors also accepted cowries, cloth or even grains to be equivalent (though often valued at an inflationary rate) of the dollar. Although the *Kaleram* and *Toloram*, like all other imposts, were collected in the name of the Shehu, the monarch had in reality no direct interest in the proceeds, which almost invariably went into the personal pockets of the fiefholders.

Warata.

This term precisely means "inherited property" and it constituted a regular source in the revenue system of the

Borno government. By means of a legal fiction of some sort, the Shehu claimed (and was generally accorded) the right to a tax on the property of his deceased subjects. Theoretically, the Shehu had this right over all his subjects, but in practice however, the right was only invoked in cases where the deceased had left behind a substantial property — in cash, kind or both. Under normal circumstances, the Shehu's share of the inheritance was fixed at ten per cent of the total value of the deceased's property and hence the amount due to the Shehu out of the *Warata* was known as *Ushr*—i.e. a tithe or one-tenth of property.¹⁸ The *Ushr* was generally collected and sent to the Shehu (via the usual channel of the *Chima* system) by a village *Alkali* (or the *Bulama* acting in a judicial capacity) who also divided the rest of the deceased's estate among his heirs according to the formula laid down by the *Shari'a*. If the deceased had no legally recognised heir, the whole of his property lapsed into the ownership of the state which in such circumstances was recognised by the Malikite code of laws as a residuary legatee.¹⁹

The "*Ushr*" was exacted even from the property of deceased slaves and thereafter the rest of the property was inherited by the master of the deceased slave. As the Islamic law governing relations between master and slave recognises the master as the sole inheritor of the property of his slave,²⁰ the regime of the *Ushr* was therefore non-applicable to the property of deceased slave officials, since the Shehu had thereby legal entitlement to the whole of such property. However, seldom, if ever, did any of the Shehu appropriate the whole of a deceased slave official's private property. The normal practice was that upon the death of any state official — slave or otherwise, the Shehu took immediate possession of all such property that were instrumental to the deceased's office, so as to be later bestowed wholly or partly on the successor to the office. In the case of private property of a deceased slave official, the Shehu, though legally entitled to the whole of such property as well, only took possession of what was left-over after having made due allowances to the descendants of the deceased. In fact, in the rare event

of the descendants of any deceased official being left without adequate provisions, in consequence of the imprudence of their progenitor in his life time, the Shehu normally assumed obligatory responsibility for the maintenance of such destitutes. The force of this obligation, therefore, served to restrain the Shehu from exercising his sole right of inheritance of the property of deceased slave officials. With regard to the private property of deceased free-born officials, the application of the *Warata* impost was clear-cut. The Shehu was only entitled to the ten percent "*Ushr*". But then what left room for a gross abuse even here, was in the distinction between the two types of property : official and personal. And, more often than not the Shehu lay claim to and acquired the personal effects of deceased officials under the pretext of identifying such effects as official property.²¹

Apart from inherited property, the "*Ushr*" was also deducted from *Diya* (blood money), awarded to the relatives of a 'murdered' persons against his 'murderer'.²² And, since within the state, murder cases were exclusively handled by the Shehu's court in the capital, the *Ushr* from *Diya* was thus assessed and collected directly without giving room for malversation to such intermediaries as the *Chima*.

Kafelo.

Strictly speaking, neither could this be classified as a regular tax. In meaning, the term "*Kafelo*" can be approximated to obligatory 'gift' and as such, it embraced a wide variety of 'Payments' ranging from gifts of merchants to the ruler, to a service fee paid by a plaintiff to a messenger for summoning a defendant, in the execution of a court order.

It is possible that the term *Kafelo* has its derivation from "*Kafila*" i.e. caravan, and if so its origin can be traced to the development of long-distance trade in the early history of Borno. But whatever was the exact nature of its origin, the *Kafelo* was identified, among other things, with the gifts made by individual merchants of a trade caravan to the Shehu through his accredited representative. As a gift,

though obligatory, the *Kafelo* should not be identified with caravan tolls, which were essentially imposts in character, and for which specific rates were generally laid down. However, whether the *Kafelo* was institutionalised in addition to, or in substitution for, the more regularised caravan tolls, cannot be ascertained here until a thorough enquiry is carried out.

One other source from which the Shehu derived income in the form of *Kafelo* was from title fees. All titled officials duly recognised by the central government (ranging from a *Bulama* to *Mai Mbauji* — a provincial governor, like the Sultan of Damagaran) had to receive their investiture from the Shehu, and the formal investiture only took place after the official concerned had paid his *Kafelo* to the Shehu. The amount to be paid in *Kafelo* was specified for each category of offices and the wide variation in fee value was no doubt reflective of the importance attached to a particular office. Thus, while the *Kafelo* paid by a *Bulama* was relatively minimal, the provincial governors (who paid the highest) contributed substantial amounts to the Shehu's treasury in both cash and goods. But it must be noted that the *Kafelo* paid for investiture did not represent a purchase of a particular office. As a rule, the appointee's *Kafelo* to the Shehu was also reciprocated by specified gifts corresponding to his title fee. The reciprocal basis of this payment thus served the function of symbolising the superior-subordinate relationship between the Shehu and his various officials.

Hadiyya²³.

It is explicit from our discussion of the *Kafelo*, in its form of a title fee, that its area of jurisdiction was not limited to the metropolitan area; since the fee was also paid by the provincial governors (*mai mbauji*). Similarly, the *Ushr* as an inheritance impost was also administered on the estates of the provincial governors. Indeed, even as late as the early period of British colonial overrule in Borno, the in-

heritance tax remained in force as a vital source of revenue to the coffers of the Shehu.²⁴ Thus, when in 1904 the Galadima, Ibrahim, (provincial governor of Nguru in the pre-colonial administrative set up) died, the Shehu sent an emissary to the deceased's son to acquire the government's share from the estate of the late Galadima. At first the son (who incidentally had already succeeded into the office of the Galadima unilaterally) proved contumacious and thus he sent back the Shehu's emissary empty handed. However, the Shehu did eventually make good his claim to the share of the late Galadima's property; and although Galadima Bukar himself was subsequently arrested and thrown into jail, the restitution of the Shehu's share of the property had only been facilitated by a promise of his formal recognition as Galadima in succession to his late father.²⁵

The point of emphasis is that the jurisdiction of the *Ushr* as an inheritance tax and the *Kafelo*, as a title fee, extended beyond the metropolitan province of Borno; even though, as it must be qualified, within the outside provinces, the provincial governors were the only subjects of the central government liable to such exactions.

By and large, the governors of the dependent states (or provinces) enjoyed considerable degree of autonomy. They collected their own taxes and dues and only remitted part of the proceeds to the Shehu as *Hadiyya* — tributes. Thus, the tributes from the dependent states constituted substitute payments for what the government in Kukawa might have collected from the provinces concerned as the proceeds of general taxation, if they had been governed directly. The tributes were paid on three separate occasions annually, and not once a year as generally assumed. The *Hadiyya* or tributes were paid in during the Muslim festivals of *Id-el-Fitr*, *Id-el-Kabir* and *Mawlud*. And, on each of the three occasions, the amount of tribute (in goods and cash) was specified for each of the provinces according to their respective sizes and wealth. Invariably, the remittances made during the two festivals of *Id-el-Fitr* and *Id-el-Kabir* were by far

less in amount than that of the *Mawlud*. Thus, Nachtigal records of the arrival in Kukawa of the emissaries of Tenim (the Sultan of Damagaram) from Zinder in November 1872 (towards the month of *Ramadan*) bearing Damagaram's tribute for the coming festival of *Id-el-Fitr*. The tribute consisted of "half a dozen lightly laden camels, which were carrying women's shawls, dark blue indigo tobes from the Sudan and some Nife (Nupe) tobes."²⁶ As Nachtigal himself points out, Damagaram, normally sent tributes also during the festivals of *Id-el-Kabir* and *Mawlud*. In the light of all these, Nachtigal's assertion, solely based on his assessment of the *Id-el-Fitr* tribute, that the Damagaram ruler was "evading his obligations" to the government in Kukawa,²⁷ seems questionable.

Ghanima.

Until the later part of the century, the Borno government's military machinery was certainly strong. The military organisation was placed on almost a permanent war-footing, since military expeditions constituted a regular feature in the activities of the government. And, whatever rationale might be offered for such expeditions, the desire for booty or *Ghanima* also certainly provided an important stimulus to the launching of the expeditions. In fact, the income derived by the government from this source was by no means inconsiderable. Thus, according to Barth's eye-witness account, an expedition to Musgu country by the Borno army under the command of the Wazir Hajj Bashir in January 1852 produced a considerable amount of *Ghanima* in slaves and livestock. The Borno leaders boasted of having taken 10,000 heads of cattle and the same number in slaves. Although Barth found the number of slaves exaggerated, he was himself convinced that they numbered not less than 3,000. Of the 3,000 slaves, Barth noted that the commander-in-chief received one-third.²⁸ But it seems not unlikely that this one-third represented the government's share of the *Ghanima* and that the comman-

der was to receive his commission out of it on delivery to the Shehu.

In addition, the provincial governors also remitted (at least occasionally) to the Shehu a share of whatever *Ghanima* they acquired from their military expeditions. Whether this type of remittance was based on a fixed formula is at the moment not clear. In any case, two cases of this type of remittance can be cited. A correspondence of Shehu Muhammad al-Amin Al-Kanemi (who had been the de facto ruler of Borno from 1814 until his death in 1837) to the Sultan of Gumel, Muhammad dan Tanoma, is hereunder quoted as a concrete piece of evidence:

“.....After this, in as much as you have explained to us that you have remitted to us a portion of the booty which you have obtained from the town Kajakuli; and apart from that you have forgotten the total of what you have remitted to us. Now, the man who is coming to you carrying this letter of ours is a member of your household, my son Umar — Allah grant him health. Put into his hand a half of what is realised from the price of the slaves; and put the other half into the hand of.....”(?)²⁹

Secondly, when sometimes in the late 1840s the Sultan of Damagaram Ibrahim bin Suleiman, made a successful expedition on the village of Dambanas (belonging to the little Hausa Kingdom of Kanche), all the captives were brought to Zinder, the capital of Damagaram, and from there some of them were sent on to Borno in remittance.³⁰

Jizya.

The relationship between the Borno government and the non-Muslim communities within and adjacent to her borders was a clearly defined one in accordance with the principles of the *Shari'a*. The Borno government did not interfere with their religious practices. Hence, segmented non-Muslim communities within Borno such as the Kere-Kere, Ngizim and Marghi were, as a rule, exempt from all

Islamic canonical dues, like the *Zakkat*; but not the *Hakki* and other secular dues. As a substitute for the *Zakkat*, they were obliged to pay a communal tribute, known as *Jizya*, to the Shehu through their respective territorial *Chima*. The *Jizya* was paid in either slaves or cash, or both, based on fixed amounts annually. In addition to this, each of the 'pagan' villages also contributed a certain number of gowns for the maintenance of the soldiers (*askar-wa*) under the respective garrison commanders administering such groups of villages. Hence, the gowns so collected were known as *Kulgu Askarwabe* — i.e. "gowns for the soldiers."³¹

This payment of gowns by the non-muslim subjects of Borno must have been based on the Islamic precedence whereby the Christians of Najran, as the *Dhimmi* subjects of the orthodox Caliphate had been privilege by the Caliph 'Umar to pay the *Jizya* "on their heads and on their land" in garments instead of cash.³² However, in the case of the non-Muslim subjects of Borno, they were obliged to contribute the gowns in addition to their tribute in cash and slaves.

The Sultanate of Logone, a predominantly non-Muslim state governed by Muslim rulers, had been a satellite of Borno since the days of the *Seifuwa*. In the context of that relationship, Logone had annually paid a token tribute of two slaves, most probably as *Jizya* to the *Mai* of Borno; and in return for this, Logone had continued to guarantee her security by the non-aggression, though not the protection, of Borno. The state of Logone maintained her autonomy, if not outright sovereignty, up to the nineteenth century. However, in the same century, sometime during the political career of Shehu Muhammad Al-Amin al-Kanemi, the Sultanate of Logone was conquered by Daud, one of the slaves of the Shehu, and incorporated into Borno. But this notwithstanding, Logone continued to enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy; except that her former tribute of two slaves came to be raised up to "one hundred

tained a conciliatory relationship with numerous other non-Muslim communities, like the petty chiefdoms of the Musgu, Marghi, Bedde and others. So long as these communities continued to send their *jizya* annually to Kuka-wa, they were recognised as territories of *aman* and the Borno government was in principle obliged to adhere to the implied treaty of non-aggression against them. By the middle of the century, Barth observed that the Borno government levied a regular tribute on the peoples neighbouring her borders, in marked contrast to the rulers of Baghirmi, who "seem to treat the poor inhabitants of the districts nearest their borders with the greatest injustice, subjecting them, in a very anomalous manner, to all sorts of contributions."³⁴ In later years, however, especially towards the end of Shehu Umar's reign (1881) even the Borno government ceased to respect the law governing Borno's relations with the non-Muslim communities, without as well as within her borders. Whenever the need for slaves and other spoils of war arose, the Borno government carried out series of raids against these communities, irrespective of whether they had stopped paying the *jizya* or not. The last of the nineteenth century, Shehu Muhammed Hashim Umar al-Kanemi (1885—93) did, however, recognise, from the depth of his religious piety, that such conduct of the government towards the non-Muslims was illegal and, accordingly, he ordered that the non-Muslim communities should no more be raided so long as they continued fulfilling their obligations of paying the *jizya*.³⁵ Whether this order was actually effected, and if so, what effect it had on the relations between the Shehu and his officials (whose income must have been curtailed by the order) are vital issues which nevertheless would have to remain unanswered, pending further enquiries.

The sources considered so far constituted, in the main, the revenue system of the Borno government under the Kanemi Shehus. The list is, however, by no means exhaustive as there could have been other sundry dues like the vexatious *Kargiram*—a sort of a general fine imposed on a

community on the occasion of a homicide. And, although the courts occasionally administered fines and fees, these (with the singular exception of the *Ushr*, collected by the courts as inheritance tax) were normally recognised as the income of the administrative and judiciary officials, and therefore did not constitute direct sources of revenue for the government.

However, it should have seemed clear from the number of revenue sources, that the government depended more on her internal resources and far less on foreign trade for her revenue. Admittedly, the external trade served as a channel through which the government exchanged war-captives for her military requirements, as well as other items of luxury. The moot point however is that external trade, especially the trans-Saharan trade, was essentially a ruling class oriented commerce and as such, its generally assumed major impact on the overall economy of the state should be de-emphasised.

Conclusion.

As to the character of the taxes and fees collected by the Borno government, some could clearly be identified as canonical while many others were purely secular. But it would seem futile, on the basis of this alone to determine the extent to which the policies of the government were in conformity with the *Shari'a*. It appears that never, since the days of the Orthodox Caliphate, did any Islamic government observe the practice of strict adherence to the purely canonical taxes. As the needs of governments increased customary levies were also adopted and incorporated into their revenue systems. And, in so far as such customary levies did not constitute a direct infringement of the *Shari'a*, they were upheld as legitimate rights of the state. Hence, the secular taxes collected by the Borno government should be recognised as such. In the Ottoman Caliphate, for instance, the canonical and secular revenues co-existed, but were distinctively identified for the purposes of accountability. The canonical, i.e. those having the explicit sanction of the *Shari'a* were known as *Ser'i*, and the secular

were those levied in case of need by virtue of the Sultan's *Urfi*, or monarchical authority.³⁶ The two revenues were kept and administered in separate treasuries for different purposes.

There was, however, no such distinction in Borno. The entire state revenue was recognised as the personal property of the Shehu, and thus the Shehu exercised the power of disposing of the revenue at will. This is, however, not to suggest that the principles of the *Shari'a* were not respected in the disbursement of the revenue. In fact, the Shehu expended a large portion of the revenue on the maintenance of the military; alms to way-farers (e.g. pilgrims), the *Ulama*, the *misakin*, orphans and other needy persons; as well as in offering hospitality to guests, like merchants, and the itinerant "Sheriffs" of North Africa, seeking gifts on the basis of their claims to direct descent from the Prophet. And of course, all these were responsibilities of government, as prescribed by the *Shari'a*.

However, it should be stated without any fear of contradiction, that by far the greater proportion of the revenue was consumed by the ruling elite, and within the capital, Kukawa (and to some extent, in the garrison head quarters, which were satellites of the capital). And this fact clearly under lines the parasitical nature of the capital in its relations with the rest of the policy.

The government was essentially law and order oriented and thus the subject population benefited from governmental revenue only in terms of the provision of security. In the day-to-day conduct of affairs, the government incurred little or no expenditure on public welfare. For, such public welfare works as the sinking of wells, building and rehabilitation of mosques, *Zango* (merchant traveller inn), *Jami* (inn for itinerant beggars, like the blind) and the like were, at least outside the capital, always carried out through communal efforts, and at no expense to the government.

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16. '...render/The dues that are proper on the day the harvest is gathered..'
Koran, VI: 141, A. Yusuf Ali's Translation and Commentary.
17. Originally, the *Kharaj* was only collected on the lands of communities that had come into treaty relations with the nascent Muslim state. The individual members of such communities paid "the *jizya* on their heads" and the "Kharaj on their lands," in return for non-aggression and protection from the Muslim community. However, if either the land owners became converted to Islam or the lands were purchased by Muslims, such lands assumed a new status and ceased to be *Kharaj* lands. Such a development, as it occurred, was not in the fiscal interest of the Muslim state, since it deprived her of a vital source of revenue, especially at a time when the fiscal commitments of the state were expanding correspondingly with her size. Hence, as a measure of securing revenue, the *kharaj* later came to be stabilised as a land tax — irrespective of the religious status of the land-owner. See : Yahya ben Adam's "Kitab al Kharaj." translated and edited by Ben Shemesh, A. as *Taxation in Islam*, Vol. I, Leiden, 1958.
18. Although nothing can be cited in legal support of the *Ushr* as an inheritance tax, it is interesting to note about its application in the Sokoto Caliphate as well. See: Last, M. *The Sokoto Caliphate*, p. 106.
19. This was in conformity with the jurisprudence of the *Maliki Madhab* which was the official doctrine in Borno; For the diversity in law of inheritance among the Islamic schools of law, See: Coulson, N.J. *Islamic Surveys No. 2, A History of Islamic Law* Edinburgh University Press, 1964), *passim*.
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21. Sometimes, very rarely though, outright confiscation of property was also practised, in consequence of an official's dismissal, or for his having fallen out of favours with the Shehu. Thus, in the reign of Shehu Bukar (1881-84), the property of Sanda Laminumi, the son and successor of Laminu Njittiya, was confiscated by the Shehu in penalty for the former's general attitude of insubordination towards his superiors — including the Shehu himself. Oral Interviews with M. Bukar Ja'afar and Abba Alli in Maiduguri, (July and August 1973).
22. The Law of the Diya was actually applicable only in cases of accidental homicide.
23. 'Tribute'—as an obligatory payment, was known as *Hadiyya* while the non-obligatory gifts or presents exchanged between Borno and other independent states were known as *Salam*.

- 1907, the proceeds from *Ushr* went directly to the coffers of the Shehu. In 1907, an arrangement was made whereby the Shehu and the British Administration shared the proceeds equally. Later on, in 1911, it was wholly abrogated by the administration. In 1908, 198 estates with a total value of £1,695 (₦3,390) were administered and out of this, £170 (₦340) was collected in *Ushr*.
25. Oral Interviews with Lawan Gaji Gana and Lawan Karagama Mamman in Nguru District of Borno Division, between July and September 1971.
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 33. Barth, H. *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.447.
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Similarly, Hashim also prohibited the practice of "Buji keli" by which a non-fief holding official sought permission from a fief holder and then went off to collect arbitrary contributions from the subject population of the fief or fief concerned.
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SECTION C.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
ORGANISATION.



CHAPTER V.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF BORNO UNDER THE SEIFUWA MAIS.

by

Muhammad Nur Alkali

The foundation of the Borno Kingdom was laid towards the end of the fifteenth century under the forceful influence of Mai Ali Gaji (c. 1470 — 1503). The collapse of the first Seifuwa state of Kanem towards the end of the fourteenth century was due largely to the failure of the Seifuwa rulers to establish a centralised system of government with effective administrative structure. The efforts of the Seifuwa to build a centralized kingdom and establish a stable system of government were handicapped by the emergence of various tribal groups and clans which gradually developed into semi autonomous entities distinct from the main Seifuwa ruling dynasty.¹ Kanem reached the peak of its power by the mid-thirteenth century under Mai Dunama Dabbalemi, but thereafter it entered a phase of civil wars which continued up to the second half of the fourteenth century. The disintegration of the kingdom followed and the Seifuwa were at last forced to migrate to the area west of the Lake Chad. However, the crisis continued for over a century and it was not until the second half of the fifteenth century that the Seifuwa founded their new and permanent capital of Gazargamo and established a base for a more stable government.

Although a detailed account of the events and circumstances preceding the establishment of this new kingdom lies outside the scope of this paper, it is important to note that the survival of the second Seifuwa state for over three centuries was partly due to those factors which aided the successful establishment of the new kingdom. A period of more than two centuries of political crisis, civil strife and occasional anarchy might have exhausted most of the

main parties involved thus giving an opportunity for ascendancy to the Seifuwa ruling class to re-assert their supremacy over the other groups.² Indeed, this was a favourable condition for the Seifuwa to form a politically more stable government. This long period of warfare might have given the Seifuwa the basis for a strong military organization which was an important factor in the maintenance of security and territorial expansion. Furthermore, the political conditions of the early Kanem state which brought about the collapse of the first Seifuwa state might have prepared the Seifuwa for a better organised political system in Borno. This partly explains why the Seifuwa were able to build a kingdom, the influence of which extended westwards to Hausaland, southwards to the Gongola region, eastwards to Kanem itself and northwards to the Fezzan. It must, however, be understood that the survival of such a vast territory for about three centuries does not largely lie on the military might of the Seifuwa, rather it lies in the system of their administration which allowed sufficient delegation of authority, and flexibility. A system of checks and balances also existed within the various institutions which administered the kingdom. In Borno the position of each of the administrative units became much clearer and their functions more clearly defined.

However, it must be pointed out that it may not be possible at this stage of our knowledge to show all the phases of development and the trends through which most of the established system of administration might have passed. Contemporary sources and written materials on this subject are extremely scanty for this period. Most of what remains as oral tradition are based on the Seifuwa system as it existed in the late eighteenth century, and as they were remembered. There has been an interval of nearly two hundred years since the Seifuwa system began to decline. Indeed, the al-Kanemi dynasty of the Shehus, established at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had introduced some changes into the original administrative structure. Yet the fact that much of the Seifuwa system was also retained and that the system itself was not completely

destroyed shows the importance of deriving much of our information on traditional accounts in establishing a model for future work on this subject — hence the object of this paper. In fact, many of the Seifuwa titles some of which existed in the early state of Kanem (e.g. Wazir, Talba, Arjinoma) have survived to the present day in Borno.

In its broad outline we can divide the political history of Borno from about 1500 to 1800 A.D., into three phases. The first phase which included most of the sixteenth century could be considered as a period of conquests and expansion.³ We may, therefore, assume that this was a time when the Seifuwa administrative structure was at the highest level of its stability and efficiency. For a stable political system and effective administrative structure were necessary pre-conditions for internal peace and therefore maintenance of security and expansion. The second phase which included a greater part of the seventeenth century could be considered as an era of consolidation. With the establishment of the office of the Galadima, as the governor of the West, and the Khalifah of Kanem in the East, new elements began to enter the administrative structure of Borno.⁴ The third phase began towards the second half of the seventeenth century and continued throughout the eighteenth century. This could be considered as a period of the maintenance of the status quo, leading to stagnation and gradual decline. During this stage the whole political system of Borno and its administrative structure became complex.

The main units in the administrative structure of Borno were the royal family which was the nucleus of the whole political system; the Council which was the decision making body of the state; the *Kogunawa*, a body of the nobility, who served as the executives and carried out the immense administrative work of the state; and the military — the composition of which included members from each of the above units. With regards to the balance which existed within these units it is important to note that the membership of each was determined by one's social or political status.

But as they had to function as integral parts of the Seifuwa political system there were no sharp dividing barriers within the hierarchy.

We have said that the royal family was the nucleus of the political system of the state. This is in view of the central position of the Mai in the state. His authority was recognized by the various tribal groups after having been confirmed by two groups of traditional kingmakers — the *Mai Kartawu* and the *Mai Bayatewu*.⁵ Modern traditions emphasize the idea that the *Mai Kartawu* were composed of the Islamic and legal advisers of the Mai's court, but such an important function as the selection of a new Mai was the responsibility of the entire Council of the State.⁶ However, it seems that the task of selection of a new Mai had posed little difficulties to the kingmakers as the reigning Mais seem to have developed the policy of preserving the throne to their eldest sons. Thus the senior son of the Mai was given the title of *Chiroma* (Crown Prince).

After the selection of the new Mai a great ceremonial occasion was observed where the Mai's appointment was confirmed in public by the Chief Imam of the state on behalf of all members of the *Mai Kartawu* and the second group — the *Mai Bayatewu* — who conducted the accession rituals. The role of this second group is significant as they had the responsibility to advise and even warn the Mai on matters affecting the life of the people in public. Among them was the *Zanna Ngijuma*,⁷ who drew the attention of the Mai to the history of his (the Mais) ancestors, making references to their brave deeds, honesty and endurance. He would refer to the Holy Qur'an as the guide of all rulers and the rulers the guide of their subjects. His concluding remark were warnings against indulgence in the worldly lusts and departure from the *Sharia* and that his reign was only temporary in this world.

“Your great grandfathers have fought three hundreds and thirty three battles and only lost three — but to-day they are nowhere to be seen”⁸

The importance of the accession rituals was indicated by the fact that immediately after the Mai had been placed on the throne a procession of various groups under his authority (including princes) came to pay their homage and swear allegiance to his authority. Indeed the ceremony was intended to show his followers that he was the supreme head of the kingdom, the owner of the land (*Kema Lardema*) and the protector of his subjects. The position of the Mai has led Ronald Cohen to describe the royal office as carrying "with it an aura of untouchability, remoteness and sacredness".⁹ But the Mai was not a kind of autocrat who took his own decisions and gave out direct instructions. The Mai had a Council which advised him and could not on his own pass all judgements without prior consultation with his legal advisers. For instance, Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua, in his description of Mai Idris Aloma's relationship with his legal advisers and the execution of justice in the second half of the sixteenth century, states :

"To gain a strict observance of the Qur'an and the Sunna he turned over all disputes to the learned judges and put off his own shoulders onto theirs (all) manner of judgements."¹⁰

It must be pointed out that any form of challenge to the authority of the Mai lay not so much in his Council or the kingmakers. Neither seemed to have exercised such powers as dethronement or deposition of the Mai. The danger to his authority lay in the upsetting of the balance which existed among the various institutions of the government that ruled in his name. These institutions — the royal family as a unit, the Council, the Kogunawa and the military, carried with them some traditional function which should be preserved intact.¹¹ The members of the royal family, for instance, and particularly the princes would often take the opportunity provided by any form of upheaval in the system of the administration and be the champions of factionalism and rebellion against the Mai. But so long as the Mais ruled the country through the aid of the Council and followed the established tradition of

division of responsibilities, titles and fiefs, they continued to draw lasting allegiance and support from their subjects.

The Mai's position and powers were also affected by the fact that several elements in the Islamic principles of government had also been introduced into the Borno administration. Thus another limitation to his powers should also be seen in this context. One of his fundamental guiding principles was the *Sharia*, as the throne was often referred to as the "cradle of Islam" (*Degal Lisalambe*).¹² Any form of departure from the *Sharia* should, therefore, be seen as making him unpopular among his followers and he would be regarded as a ruler who has left the path of God (*Shara Kolzena*).¹³ Tyranny and oppression, self rule, dishonesty and negligence of responsibility, which were the weaknesses of any state, were among those things condemned by Islam. This partly explains why the Mai's relied largely on their Islamic advisers. The Mai's association with any of these weaknesses could open the channel through which his powers could be challenged by the Councillors and the nobility. This would make his position insecure — thus opening the chance for palace revolutions, often led by ambitious princes in collaboration with the Councillors and the nobility.

However, the Mai's primary concern in the success of the administration of the state was not only confined to his direct relationship with his Councillors and the Kogunawa. As we have indicated, any form of challenge against his authority was channelled through and with the collaboration of the royal family. This was because the royal family was the central unit that provided the leadership for the state and in the event of the Mai losing his office, it still fell on that family to provide a more effective leader. In view of such a delicate position of the royal family one of the Mai's primary duties was to maintain stability within the royal family itself. He should, for example, adhere strictly to the rules of distribution of offices and fiefs to the members of the royal family. So, in short, one of the main purposes of providing offices to the members of the royal family was to make them involved in the administration of the state. This as in the

case of the princes might also ease any tension which might be caused by their idleness or redundancy. It was also the means by which the members of the royal family could derive their revenue to maintain themselves, and a major step towards strengthening the overall financial position of the royal family.

The most important office holders of the royal family were the Magira (the Queen mother) and the Gumsu (the first wife of the Mai). The Magira was the holder of the largest number of fiefs in the state. Some of the Magira's fiefs had survived to the present day and are referred to in traditions as the "settlements of a thousand slaves each".¹⁴ The Magira in her position as the Queen mother derived much respect and allegiance from the Mais followers. The Gumsu, the first wife of the Mai was responsible for the administration within the royal palace which she carried out with the assistance of the other three wives of the Mai. The nature of the administrative organization, and the emphasis on the titles in the royal palace, also shows how large the royal family had been in those days. A system of reward and punishment existed in the royal palace which gave the Gumsu a considerable amount of power over the rest of the members of the royal family.¹⁵ The immense responsibilities of the royal family shouldered by the Gumsu no doubt relieved the Mai from involving himself in the petty feuds and problems which might detract his attention from other important duties of the state.

In her capacity as the head of the administration of the royal family, the Gumsu was also responsible for the welfare of the princesses. The princesses were well looked after and were given the necessary training which could prepare them for their future homes. This gained them a lot of prestige and admiration from their potential husbands — the members of the Mai's court, provincial governors and malams.¹⁶ The practice helped in establishing good relationship between the royal family and the top ranking officers of the state.

Outside the palace, the Gumsu, like the Magira, was given her own share of fiefs which were administered on her

behalf by her representatives. From the "Account of Gazar-gamo" we are able to gain some idea of the position of the Gumsu and her authority,

"The courtiers of the Gumsu were sixty men, all of noble rank. There were fifty slaves who worked for her and twenty men at arms who went out to fight and who maintained Gumsu's authority. Each one of these twenty men commanded a thousand slaves. Thus were they organised".¹⁷

In the case of the princes, most of whom resided outside the place (*Mainari*), the Gumsu had no direct authority over them. They attended their special session in the Mai's Court (*Sambo Mainabe*)¹⁸ every day before the general court assembled. In this gathering a series of ceremonial programmes were observed, the most important of which included the paying of a special allegiance to the throne,¹⁹ and prayer in memory of their forefathers and the future security of the state. This arrangement helps in bringing the princes closer to the Mai and also to make them feel that they were the highest citizens of the state.

Elements of Instability Within The Royal Family.

There might be the tendency through the administrative organization of the royal family to assume that the royal family had been built on a stable foundation. This elaborate administrative structure might have served as the basis for peaceful co-existence within the royal family during the early phase of the establishment of the state. But as time went on there must have been the possibilities of various claimants to the titles and offices constituting a threat to the established order of administration. For instance, at the death of one Mai and the accession of another a new class of title holders had to be established. There should be a new Gumsu the wife of the new Mai. But the old Gumsu who could also be the new Mai's mother could not automatically be installed as the Magira, if another Magira was already in the office. This sudden collapse of the authority of the Gumsu who had hundreds of followers could

hardly be compensated. Some of her fiefs could still be left to her as a source of her revenue, but most of them were to become a part of the new Gumsu's holdings. It would have been more favourable for the old Gumsu if her son was on the throne, but even this does not mean that the Mai had to depart from an established tradition and install his own mother as the new Magira. This would upset the balance of an established order of administration. But the old Gumsu stood a greater chance to the appointment as the Magira if her son survived long enough on the throne.

It is often maintained in traditions that the interval between the death of one Mai and the accession of another was one of the most crucial periods for the security of the state. This was because within the royal family several changes and loss of status for many personalities had to take place. This situation was often rescued by the quick arrangement for the succession after the death of a Mai. For this short period the authority passed into the hands of the Mainin Kenandi and the Talba, who were the Islamic advisers of the Majlis.²⁰ Traditions also maintain that most of the disputes and revolts from the nobles against the Mai's authority came about as a result of collaboration between the royal title holders (particularly the princes) and the nobles themselves.

The royal family was a medium through which the stability of the state was maintained. Its collapse as a unit is often associated with the collapse of the whole state because it was the source of leadership for the state. But the position of the royal family as a nucleus of the whole political system does not necessarily supersede the importance and influence of the Mai's Council (*Majlis*), as a decision making body of the state.²¹ The membership of the Majlis did not seem to have included the influential members of the royal family. This is shown by the fact that the highest officers of the royal family were the Magira and the Gumsu and as women, the Islamic tradition does not allow them the opportunity to sit in the Majlis.²² Princes too were not known to have council membership status.²³ The Council was a unit by itself and its composition was made up of a

distinct group of title holders of the Mai's Court. Its establishment as a unit corresponds with the Islamic principle of "al-Shura" through which the ruler was obliged to make consultations with elders of the state.²⁴

The Majlis.

We have come across various traditional accounts with regards to the composition of the Mai's Council, (the Majlis) functions and powers of the various members. The most commonly maintained version on the composition of the Council was that which gives the number of twelve nobles as members of the Majlis. Nevertheless as accounts vary as to who they were and what particular functions each member of the Council performed it is difficult even to resolve on this commonly expressed figure. But considering the functions of some of the title holders of the state we can establish with little doubt some of the membership of the Council. It is however difficult to produce a permanent list of the members of the Mais Majlis since the membership seemed to have varied from time to time. Furthermore, it is not even clear whether there was a standard practice for the selection of the Councillors. What seems clear is that most of the foundation members of the state, who had been close advisers of the ruler during the establishment of the new kingdom must have laid the base for hereditary succession within their respective families.

However, despite the variety of accounts with regards to the membership of the Council, all are agreed that the position of certain group of office holders, as members of the Council, remained unchanged. First was the Mainin Kenandi (second in rank to the Mai) who was also the Islamic and legal adviser of the Mai. His duties included the interpretation and definition of legal terms in conformity with the *Sharia*, he and he was expected to be a man of an exceptionally high Islamic learning. The Mainin Kenandi worked in conjunction with the Talba²⁵ who was a magistrate and responsible for the execution of justice on behalf of the Mai. The importance attached to the Islamic

principles of government must have brought the Mainin Kenandi and the Talba to the forefront of the Council membership after the Mai. Perhaps it might be difficult at this state of our knowledge to decide on the functions and powers of the Mainin Kenandi in relation with the Waziri who was the Mai's assistant in performing his political affairs. It is even more difficult to do so when some of the known sources and traditions give the indication that some of the major state policies, whether political, economic or social, were formulated in conformity with the early Islamic concept of government. The Waziri, in the Islamic context, had either a delegated or executive powers, but there are enough indications that the Waziri under the Seifuwa administration had both delegated and executive authority. His main functions were to ensure the successful administration of the fiefs, collection of the taxes, recommendation for the appointment or promotion of state officials. In short, he was the head of the civil service. The next member of the Council was the head of the Borno army — the Kaigama — who attended the Council sessions and offered his advice where military matters were concerned. There were also the two important provincial Governors, — the Yerima and the Galadima — who were often referred to as the members of the Council. The Yerima who was known as the governor of the "Yeri" Province seems to have resided for most of his time in the capital, while his province was administered on his behalf by a subordinate officer.²⁷ The Galadima — the governor of the "western territories" — resided in his provincial capital of Nguru, but paid occasional visits to the capital of Gazargamo during which he also held his Council membership status.

These members of Council no doubt carried with them some state functions and responsibilities, but there were also other category of members who performed a ceremonial role. They were responsible for the maintenance of order, ceremonies in the conduct of meetings and attending to visitors to the court. For instance, the Zarma Kura'a function was to remind the Mai of the advice and warning given to him at the installation ceremony. Thus his remarks

“Kana Kauwa Genas” (i.e. “beware — remember the past and watch out for the future”) was repeatedly made each time the Mai appears to have lost his temper.²⁸

What then were the functions of the Majlis? One of the most important functions, as earlier mentioned, was the selection of a new Mai after the death of the ruling Mai. In the selection of a new Mai the Council might be larger in size as often some members of the royal family were called upon to take some mediatory role where disputes were likely to occur. In its normal function the Council discussed vital state issues and took decisions on them. It decided upon the declaration and conduct of war, appointment of new state officials — their promotions or demotions and the distribution of the fiefs. The Council also functioned as a Supreme Court where cases involving important state officials or land disputes were settled.²⁹

The presence of a Council does not mean that its powers exceeded that of the Mai. The decision of the Councillors was by no means final. In this regard we can see two types of Council meetings — the first was that which was held without the Mai and its decisions were later on forwarded to the Mai for his consideration. The second type of meeting was that which was presided over by the Mai and decisions were finalized. However, the senior members of the Council could, on their own take some decisions of minor importance without necessarily drawing the Mai's attention.³⁰ In some cases only where their decision was most likely to affect an important policy of the state should they approach the Mai. So, the “Chief and Council” system of Borno which continued to the present century had its roots deep in the past.

When the Mai himself was in the Council the rest of the members performed not more than an advisory role. Tradition does not consider the Mai's Council as a centre for controversy and serious debates. Though there could be the likelihood of divided opinions on whether war should be declared upon another territory; or on whether who should be appointed to a certain post; the Mai's intervention would settle the controversy. The decision of the Mai always carried the heaviest weight. But it is not to be

assumed that the Mai was, therefore, at liberty to take any decision in order to suit his own interest. The principles upon which he should base his decision had earlier been mentioned; where it is sufficient to state that the Mai could not over-rule every decision but to make his authority felt he might not accept every decision. He could be forceful enough where he knew he was right and the Council was wrong.

The Mai's Court Officials.

When the Mai and his Council took their decisions the directions were given out in the Mai's court (Noguna) where most of the state officials assembled. It was a gathering of all the nobles held at least once every day and it was arranged for them to pay their homage to the Mai and receive the orders of the Council. The Kogunawa could be classified from the lowest rank of a servant (*Waladi*) to the highest rank of a titled noble (*Koguna Kagalawa*).³¹ They came third in rank as a unit after the royal family (including the Mai) and the Majlis. However, their importance as a unit is shown by the fact that the Mai conferred upon many of them various titles in order to secure their loyalty and services.

The point must be emphasized that the attainment of a title in the Mai's Court was often one of the most important qualifications for the acquisition of a fief in the state. It was also the highest status every individual who was associated with the royal palace strived to achieve. No person who was not close to the Mai's administration could be given any title or fief, and to qualify for either, one often started from the lowest rank — the *Waladi*. Slaves (*Kaliya*) who served the Mai had also good chances for the attainment of titles.

There were two categories of title holders in the administration. First were the hereditary titles which were held by some respected families of the state. This was largely confined to the high ranking officers of the state — the members of the *Majlis*, and some members of the royal family and the Kogunawa. This arrangement was important

as most of these high ranking officers such as the Waziri, the Mainin Kenandi, Talba, Galadima, Yerima, Arjinoma seem to have been the descendants of the foundation members of the state. Likewise many among the Kogunawa also held hereditary titles. Here it must be pointed out that one hereditary title may not necessarily be confined to a particular family. In some cases two or three families might be entitled to one post in the state which was to be rotated among them.³² Yet it seems that even in this system close association with the Mai or his councillors, and merit, counted more than the rotational device. This system as might be imagined could give rise to competition among the families themselves and it also determined the degree of their loyalty to the Mai.

The second category of titles were those conferred upon some nobles for their lifetime only and after their death the posts were declared vacant and were given to others of good performance.³³

The division of titles and offices into various categories and status have made it necessary for the Mai and the Council to follow strictly the established rules of appointments and to preserve the system. It seems obvious that any major changes affecting the nature of the distribution of these titles were most likely to bring serious upheavals into the whole political system.³⁴ This should not, however, imply that the Mai's capacity to check excesses of power or insubordination from among his followers was greatly reduced. He could, with the support of his Council deprive a family of their monopoly over a particular title if that family deviated from an established order, or showed their disobedience against the Mai's authority.

Not much is known about the traditional functions of most of the titles held by the Kogunawa. But there seems to have been more ceremonial titles than those which had specific function attached to them. Among the latter there were offices which were responsible for trade, security, and protocol. The officer in charge of trade was traditionally known as the Zanna Arjinoma and one of his most important duties was to look after welfare of all foreign traders,

coming into the capital.³⁵ He was responsible for the administration of the various markets which were largely carried out by the Mala Kasuube (head of the market administration) in every large market. The Arjinoma also negotiated on behalf of the Mai with the foreign traders over the purchase of certain items which might be required by the Mai.³⁶ The head of security was the Zanna Ndubuwama — an officer who was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the capital and outside.³⁷ In cases of raids and attacks by robbers the Ndubuwama could organise expedition (*Kadu*) which would pursue the criminals and rescue the victims. It however, seems that due to the size and extent of the Borno Kingdom in the later years of the sixteenth century and onwards, the functions of his department must have been greatly decentralised. The next important officer was the Zanna Karedelima³⁸ whose functions corresponds with those of the present day officers of protocol. He was responsible for the organization of ceremonies and receptions on special occasions such as the *sallah* festivals. He welcomed important guests to the Mai's court and was responsible for their welfare.

It must, however, be noted that the Arjinoma Ndubuwama and the Karedilima were so far some of the officers whose functions appeared to have come more into light, but the variety of accounts with regards to the functions of many other officers only help us to conclude that there had also been some system of non-specialization of functions through which any officer could be called upon to carry out some state responsibilities when the need arose.

System of Fief Administration.

In dealing with the system of fief administration in Borno it is important to take two points into consideration. First, is the eligibility for the attainment of a fief and secondly the functions of the fief holder. With regards to the eligibility it should be taken into consideration that the Mai was the supreme head of the state, the owner of the land (*Kema Lardema*) and also its protector. Every piece of land (*cidi*) belonged to him and those who administered it did so on

his behalf and in his name. Since the Mai had the sole responsibility of giving out fiefs, the relationship with him was necessary for the acquisition of a fief. The relationship could be "blood relationship" as in the case of the members of the royal family. The second type of relationship was that which existed between the Mai and his loyal followers — the members of his Council who were themselves descendants of important families of the state, and the Kogunawa who carried out the bulk of the administrative work on his behalf.

The ownership of certain fiefs was hereditary just as some of the offices were hereditary. But this hereditary status was only confined to the high ranking officers of the state — the members of his Council who were themselves descendants of important families of the state, and the Kogunawa who carried out the bulk of the administrative work on his behalf.

The ownership of certain fiefs was hereditary just as some of the offices were hereditary. But this hereditary status was only confined to the high ranking officers of the state — the members of the royal family, the members of the Council and some powerful members of the Koguna group. The lesser nobility who were able to possess fiefs for lifetime only, after which they were declared vacant and were given out to other members of the nobility.

One officer could have several fiefs under his administration in different parts of the state. But the idea of giving out a large territory to any one officer as a fief seems to have been avoided since there was the likelihood of such officers claiming excesses of political power against the Mai's authority. The only exception was when it became necessary to protect border territories against possible invaders in which case a strong representative of the Mai was stationed to look after the security of the territory.³⁹

Fief holders were divided into two categories — the territorial fief holder (*cima cidibe*) and the tribal head (*cima jilibe*).⁴⁰ The senior fief holders, (*cima cidibe kura*) and the *cima jilibe Kura* resided in the capital where they could serve as the coordinators between the administration of

their fiefs and the central government. Thus any fief holder in the capital was also known as the *cima cidibe* or *jilibe Kura*. The tribal head was given the responsibility to administer the territories inhabited by his fellow tribesmen. His appointment was often on the basis of acceptability of his leadership by his tribesmen. This arrangement often applied to conquered territories where the tribes had not been entirely incorporated. Whatever the case might be, a representative of that tribe through whom they could get access to the central government resided in the capital and retained his position as the *cima jilibe Kura*.

The senior fief holder and the senior tribal head both resident in the capital administered their fiefs through their subordinates known as the junior fief holder *cima cidibe gana* and junior tribal head *cima jilibe gana*.

What then were the functions of the fief holders? The *Cima Kura* was responsible for a successful functioning of the administration of the land assigned to him. This he did through a close supervision and control of his representative the *cima gana*. The *cima gana* was responsible for the collection of taxes (*hakki*) on behalf of the *cima Kura*.⁴¹ In principle all the taxes collected was to go to the Mai's treasury (*Baitulmal*). The *Cima gana* also exercised his political authority over the areas he administered. He settled minor disputes among the people, supervised the proper and regular conduct of trade and farming.

The most important function of the fief holders was to raise troops for the state army at the request of the central government.⁴² Most of the able bodied men, were recruited into the army in cases of emergency. In carrying out these functions successfully there was an intense co-ordination of efforts and delegation of authority. It must be noted that the Mai's court presided over by the legal advisers tried cases concerning land disputes among the fief holders. The Council was the body which decided whether a fief was to be confiscated from its holder, or its size reduced. In general, the fief holders were under the direction that they should maintain law and order in their areas of jurisdiction and to see to it that the collection of

taxes and the payment of tributes were properly carried out. They were also under instruction to keep well within their own boundaries. The ability of the *cima* in performing his duties was judged by his efficiency to administer his fiefs successfully. But where the *cima* has failed in the administration of his fiefs it would result in the reduction of the size of his fiefs. Where he was absolutely incapable of performing his duties, it would even result in the confiscation of his fiefs though this largely applied to the nobility rather than the royal family. On the other hand the successful *cima* was either rewarded with more fiefs or given another title which raised his status much nearer to the Mai's court. Thus the system of fief holding in Borno opened a ground for competition among the followers of the Mai and through this means the Mai was able to secure the loyalty of the bulk of his subjects.

Military Organisation.

The Kaigama was the commander-in-chief of the Borno army and was responsible for the general organization and command of the troops (*askerwa*). The origin of the title is not clear but almost certainly it was in existence before the establishment of the second Seifuwa state. Prior to the restoration of peace and order under Mai Ali Gaji, the Kaigama had extremely wider powers and seems to have been in a position to depose the Mai himself.⁴³ But it seems that there had been tremendous limitation to the Kaigama's powers as a result of the administrative reforms of Mai Ali Gaji.⁴⁴ First, many traditional accounts maintain that the office of the Kaigama was given to a person of slave origin so that the Mai could secure his absolute loyalty. Secondly, all members of the army recognized the Mais as the supreme head of the army and the Kaigama only his representative or an intermediary between them and the Mai. The subordinate status of the Kaigama was shown when he paid his allegiance to the Mai in the presence of all his soldiers in a great ceremony (*tawur*) before leaving for the battlefield.

The Kaigama, in his task of organization of the army was closely assisted by the Zarmas⁴⁵ who were responsible for the organisation of the various regiments. Traditions make references to "the twelve flag bearers" (*alamgu megun indin*) or as Koelle noted (*alam megu nduri Maibe*) who were the regimental commanders. But it seems that all the Zannas had their military functions to perform and it is therefore possible that there could have been more than twelve regimental commanders.⁴⁶ Among the members of the Mai's Council, the Mainin Kenandi and the Waziri also accompanied the army, but the Talba, according to traditions remained in the capital and acted on behalf of the Mai. Many of the princes were also expected to join the army.

There seems to have been a standing army in the capital comprising the military officers mentioned and their followers — the *waladi* — and other bodyguards who had no titles but were members of the Koguna group. The officers themselves had a large number of followers, who while recognizing the nearest authority of their masters also gave their absolute loyalty to the Mai.⁴⁷

However, in the case of emergency a general mobilization was carried out both in the capital and other parts of the state at the direction of the Mai at any time. But the frequency of wars particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during which Borno was an expansionist power must have made the task of recruitment a continuous exercise. The task of recruitment outside the capital, as mentioned earlier, was the responsibility of the *cima gana* who received the orders from his senior lord — the *cima kura*. Tradition does not regard the task of recruitment as difficult because there were always willing volunteers who were prepared to serve the army. There were several factors which made the task of recruitment much easier. First was that the local inhabitants of one area within the state, could receive the necessary aid from the main army against their raiding neighbours. Therefore, the spirit of collective action and voluntary service was high among a great majority of people throughout the kingdom. The other important

factor in attracting more people into the army as might be expected was the desire for booty and material gains in the battlefield. Thus when the signal drum (*Tumbal*) was beaten repeatedly in the *cima*'s residence hundreds of able-bodied people converged on the village where the first preparations were to begin.⁴⁸ After the recruitment exercise the various leaders of the territorial units converged on the capital followed by their recruits in procession. The only exceptional groups were those recruited along the route through which the army was to pass. These were to join the main army as they passed along.

In the capital there seems to have been a number of activities which were equivalent to training programmes. The most important of these was the *barga* a kind of dance in which all the soldiers participated. A special kind of dance which was only limited to the military officers — the Kaigama, the Zarmas and the Zanna's — was known as the *asker*. Both the *barga* and the *asker* had several purposes the most important of which was to raise the morale of the army and to make them acquainted with each other. War songs were sung, praises made to the Mai and the great soldiers of the past. It gave the soldiers more courage, and it also gave them a common identity.

It is not, however, known whether this training extended to the use of the war weapons such as the arrows (*Kenyige*), battle axe (*Chonge*), a curved sharp edged weapon the (*Ngaliyar*) shields (*Ngwaa*).⁴⁹ What seems clear is that most of such weapons were carried by the footmen (*sati*). The horesemen were normally said to have carried spears (*Kazaa*); a kind of harpoon (*bellam*), sword (*Kashagar*), and shields. They must have trained themselves on how to handle these weapons.

Throughout these training programmes the Mai hardly seems to have taken any part. The progress of the recruitment and the training were notified to him from time to time. Before the troops left the capital a great rehearsal of the whole army was arranged in a ceremony known as the *Bata* and *Tazwur*.⁵⁰ It was at this stage that the Mai had the time to see the organization and strength of his

army. The Kaigama assisted by the Zarmas and other military officers arranged the horsemen in line (*bata*). Most traditional accounts maintain that the footmen who carried the bows and arrows led the front line so that they could clear the way for the horsemen by attacking the first line of the enemy.⁵¹ Each of the lines were placed under the command of one military officers. It is not known whether the Zannas commanded a single line each but there is more ground to believe that there could be several lines under the command of one Zanna.

It was after the organization of the army into their respective lines that the Kaigama came to swear his oath of allegiance before the Mai. Thus he dismounted his horse and with a bare head he led his horse in front of the entire army. This last ceremony in which the Kaigama paid his allegiance to the Mai was known as the *tawurs*⁵² and had two main purposes. First was to emphasize the position of the Kaigama as subordinate to the Mai before an audience of his troops, and for the Mai to confirm this fact. Secondly by leading the procession he could demonstrate to the Mai the strength of his army and that the preparation for the war had been completed.

An account of military activity and strategy in the field lies outside the scope of this paper but it is necessary to point out that one's performance in the battlefield also determined one's appointment to a higher office in the Mai's administration. In short, a military expedition was an important factor in any changes which might be introduced into the main administrative structure. This was so considering the likelihood of some office holders losing their lives in the battlefield. Military organization was a part and parcel of the Borno political system and it was an important means by which the Mai's territory could be expanded. Therefore, the spirit of courage and determination always accompanied the ambitious soldier, which in turn added more force to the spirit of collective action for the Mai's victory and the security of the empire.

R E F E R E N C E S.

1. One most important contributory factor to this as suggested by Abdullahi Smith was the "emergence of grouping within the kinship structure of the Magumi". See A. Smith's "The Early States of the Central Sudan"; *History of West Africa*, Vol. I., J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder London, 1971, p. 176.
2. It must be noted that the Seifuwa only re-asserted their supremacy but did not completely subdue the rival groups such as the Bulala and the Sav whose conflict with them continued up to the reign of Mai Idris Aloma.
3. See J.O. Hunwick's "Songhay, Borno and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century". Ajayi and Crowder. *op. cit.*, p. 202.
4. It is not clear exactly whether the two offices were established as the same time as a deliberate policy on the part of the Seifuwa.
5. *Mai Kartawu* (i.e. those who select the Mai). The "*Mai*" "*Bayatewu*" (i.e. those who install the Mai). In short they conducted the accession rituals of the installation at the ceremony. Field notes : Royal family II (23) Ngurno — Maiduguri, field notes.
6. Taking into consideration that the Council was the decision making body of the state.
7. The Zanna Ngijima was the title for the traditional praise singer of the royal palace. The title still survives in Borno with its functions unchanged. See also J.R. Patterson *Kanuri Songs*, Lagos, 1926.
8. That is "they are physically unable to do anything now" The Zanna Ngijime's praise recorded (tape : Royal family : 6:) also adds "Dunya fato Kolotebe" meaning "the world is a temporary home."
9. R. Cohen, *The Kanuri of Borno*, New York, 1967, pp.20.
10. A.R. Palmer, *History of the first Twelve years of the Reign Mai Idris Aloma* (Ms. p.21), pp.20.
11. There were offices preserved only for the members of the royal family, and those preserved only for the members of the *Majlis* and the Kogunawa (see below). There seems to have been some definite traditional barriers between the different units.
12. Field notes — Royal family II: Imam Bulama (Chief Imam — Monguno's collections of praise songs). "Madalla" praise song of the royal family : oral tradition tapes, Maiduguri. Some other versions are — "Wasela lisalambe" (i.e. the pillar of the Islam) "Shara Nabibe" (the Court of the Prophet).
13. *Ibid.*
14. Also Muhammad Salih Ibn Ishak writing in about 1658/9 A.D. mentions that the King Ali Ibn al-Hajj inherited "ten thousands slaves" for his immediate use when the Magira died. The number might have been exaggerated but it gives a rough idea of the extent of the Magira's powers (*Bulletin S.O.A.S.*; London, V, 1929, pp. 544 — 7 and 552 — 3).
15. One of the Gumsu's most important function as remembered in traditions was to recommend to the Mai those slave girls (*cirwa*) of good performances for the position and status of *Kambe* free born); Field notes: Royal family II ; praise songs of the royal family I.
16. Princesses were given in marriage to members of the Mai's Council, Provincial governors, and Mallams to establish cordial relationships.
17. Muhammad Salih ibn Ishak *op. cit.*, p.....
18. The Assembly of princes. Field notes — Royal family (II) General — Monguno/Maiduguri notes.
19. The point as to whether the princes paid allegiance to the Mai or throne is not made clear at all. The significance of the latter which is mostly emphasized in traditions is that the Mai too like the other princes was a participant.

36. The information on the Zanna Arjinoma was also provided by the Shettima Kanuribe, Imam Bulama (Chief of Imam of Monguno), Goni Bukar Al-Misbar (Monguno), Waziri Bukar Bintumi (Monguno) and the late Galadima Mai Kyari (Feild notes — Monguno/ Maiduguri).
37. Field notes : It is also interesting to note that the title Zanna Ndubuwama is still retained and was conferred on the N.A. Chief of Police by the Shehu of Borno.
38. Field notes/Royal family—Kogunawa—Monguno/Maiduguri. Information also obtained from documents preserved by the Shettima Kanuribe.
39. One such exception, for instance, was the Galadima who was entrusted with the security of the Western territories of Borno, from his base at Nguru.
40. For the materials on the fief — some of the useful information came from the Magira, late Malam Bukar Maduwama (collection of praise songs in connection with the fiefs "nazmu Wakkil Maibe") Imam Bulama Chief Imam Monguno. Field notes/Royal family II.
41. Our information on the tax system and other revenue for this period is very scanty. However, there seems to have been a land tax (*cidiram*) which was obligatory on every farmer see also Leo Africanus : *The History and Description of Africa*, trans. J. Pory, 1600, pp. 832 — 833. Secondly there was the *Kasuguram* paid to the head of the market administration (Malam Kasunbe) by all traders who came to the market, third — was the *dibalram* paid by traders for the protection given to them while passing through Borno territory.
42. See section on military organization below.
43. See A. Smith's "The Early States of the Central Sudan" *op.cit.*, pp. 180.
44. H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa* Vol. II, 1965 pp. 589.
45. The Zarma's were also known as the regimental commanders. The title was also held by an officer who led the Mai's procession. Perhaps what the two titles might have in common was that the other led a unit of the army and the other led the Mai's procession. Koelle *op.cit.* pp. 259 — 60), also discusses the role of the "Zarma".
46. That is only if taken for granted that each Zanna led a unit of the army.
47. There were no references in tradition of a standing army stationed in barracks.
48. Field notes: Royal family I — praise songs".
49. There appears to have been other war weapons of which we have no much details. Koelle for instance mentions the "*balamtami*" a kind of "battle axe suspended from the saddle bow" (see Koelle *op.cit.*, pp. 266).
50. Field notes : "Kogunawa and Military" also Royal Family I "praise songs". The Bata is still retained in Borno though it is for ceremonial purposes only.
51. The disruption of the enemy line is emphasised as one of the most important military strategy.
52. The *tawur* is no longer observed in Borno.

20. The Mainin Kenandi and the Talba however could hold the office for longer period depending on how soon the new Mai could be installed. Oral traditions often emphasize that the death of the Mai would not be announced until the new Mai was selected.
21. The term *Majlis*, which must have been derived from the Arabic term for a Council, is repeatedly used in modern traditions. Even the Shehu's Council in Borno today is referred to as the *Majlis*.
22. Tradition does not consider the Magira and the Gumsu to have been members of the Mai's Council. Because of their position as the most important women of the royal family they were considered to have been in seclusion most of their time. Field notes : Royal family II.
23. In fact the princes lived in the assumption that they were the highest citizens of the state without having much if any influence on the decision making body (the Council) of the state.
24. The principle of consultation is contained in the *Holy Qur'an* : Sura (chapter) 42. in particular verse 39 "And those who hearken to their Lord, and observe prayer and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation... His reward is with Allah. Surely He loves not the wrong doers." See also commentary in text translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Lahore, Pakistan, n.d. pp. 1305, footnote.
25. It has been said that the Talba was also the head of the police, see S.W. Koelle, *African Native Literature*, "Akadamische Druck U. Verlagsanstalt Graz — Austria 1968, pp. 404. But this was probably due to his position as a magistrate. Traditional account associate the head of the police with the membership of the Noguna.
26. al-Mawardi in his "*al-Ahkam al-Sultaniya*" distinguishes between two kinds of "Wazir". The first "wizarat tafwid" (delegated powers) and "wizarat tanfidh" with executive powers.
27. Field notes — Kogunawa/Majilasku — Maiduguri pp. 14 — 61 (miscellaneous). The idea often expressed on the administrative divisions of Borno into four quadrants (each administered by a representative of the Mai — the Yerima being one of them) is not commonly expressed in traditions. There are also no reliable sources to that effect.
28. Information also confirmed by the "Shettima Kanuribe" of Borno. Also Royal family notes I — (praise songs of the royal palace"). Uwaisul Karni (Royal family notes II).
29. It is not known whether there was a regular meeting of the Council to discuss state issues. But as the members of the Council were said to have assembled every morning to pay their homage to the Mai, we can conveniently assume that any state issue of importance was also discussed at these meetings. We cannot also rule out the possibilities of emergency meetings.
30. Taken for granted that the Council members always assembled at the Wazir's residence before coming to pay their homage to the Mai.
31. It was possible for one to attain the membership of the Koguna without necessarily being conferred a title. It was a step towards the attainment of a title.
32. Field notes : Maiduguri (Kogunawa and miscellaneous) also information provided by the Shettima Kanuribe.
33. Most of the slaves and all the eunuchs who held titles fall within this category.
34. For instance titles preserved for the royal family should not be conferred on any member of the Koguna group. Likewise it would be degrading to confer the title preserved for the Kogunawa upon members of the Council or Royal family. Field notes — Royal family I, II, and miscellaneous notes.
35. Tradition refer to the Zanna Arjinoma as the "Kura Wasiliwabe" meaning head of the Wasilis (term given to traders from north Africa).

A LIST OF SOME OF THE TITLES OF BORNO

Mai	—	Ruler	Royal family	Replaced by Shehu
Magira	—	Queen mother	Royal family	title survives
Magaram	—	Official sister	Royal family	title survives
Ya Grena	—	Magira's assistant	Royal family	title survives
Gumsu	—	Senior Wife of the Mai	Royal family	title survives
Labura	—	Second Wife of the Mai	Royal family	title now out of use
Makitama	—	Third Wife of the Mai	Royal family	title now out of use
Maibi	—	Fourth Wife of the Mai	Royal family	title now out of use
Kirjiloma	—	First concubine	Royal family	title survives
Surakagu	—	Second	Royal family	title now out of use
Chindiram	—	Third	Royal family	title now out of use
Chiroma	—	Crown prince	Royal family	title now out of use
Maina	—	Any Prince	Royal family	title now out of use
Mairam	—	Any princess	Royal family	now substituted by Abba, but still used.
Mastrema	—	Magira's representative in the admin. of her fiefs	Royal family	now substituted by Nana still used
Mainin Kenandi	—	Legal adviser	Council	title now going out of use
Talba	—	Magistrate/Kadi	Council	title survives
Waziri	—	Mai's assistant	Council	title survives
Kaigama	—	Commander in Chief	Council	title survives
Yerima	—	Governor of the Yeri Province	Council	title survives
Galadima	—	Governor of the Western Provinces	Council	title survives
Zarma I	—	Led Mai's procession	Council	title survives

Zarma II Gona and Kura.	—	Regimental Commanders	Koguna	title now out of use
Zanna Kazalma	—	Responsible for the performance of rituals for the appointment of a new office holder		
Zanna Sunoma	—	Responsible for the adjournment of Council sessions	Council	title survives
Zanna Karedelima	—	Chief of Protocol	Council	title survives
Zanna Arjinoma	—	Trade	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Ndubuwama	—	Security	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Kabuskoma	—	Function not clear	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Kalauma	—	In charge of Mai's Stable	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Yirima	—	used to bring ram (Yiri Da'ilo) for the Mai at Id-El Kabir	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Wuroma	—	Jester	Koguna	title going out of use
Zanna Ar'alingamma—	—	Used to bring temerined to the Mai's Court — (Ceremonial)	Koguna	
Zanna Dalatu	—	function not clear	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Ngijima	—	Official praise singer	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Babuma	—	Official praise singer	Koguna	title survives
Libulama	—	Official praise singer	Koguna	title survives
Zakkama	—	Official praise singer	Koguna	title going out of use
Zanna Luntima	—	Zanna Arjinoma's assistant	Koguna	title survives
Zanna Malilima	—	Function not clear	Koguna	title going out of use

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN BORNO UNDER SHEHU MUHAMMAD AL-AMIN AL-KANEMI: THE CASE OF THE MAJLIS.

by
Kyari Tijjani

Introduction

In an attempt to achieve clarity of meaning and adequate explanation of social reality people trained in the social sciences, much to the dismay of their colleagues in the arts, resort to a specialised language which seem to carry meaning only to the social scientists themselves. Thus the subject I have selected for this paper requires some explanation. Accordingly, to borrow from Malinowski by institutions, I simply mean "the social arrangements that can be said to meet needs....."¹ By structure, I mean "the orderly arrangement of parts",² and in the specific instance of this paper, I mean the order in which the personnel of officials are arranged within a certain institution. By arrangement, I mean a little more than just their physical location within the place of work. More specifically, I mean the arrangement of their roles or duties — i.e. who is competent to do what and whose further action will overrule whose. In the specific sense of the political community known as the 'state' which we are going to discuss in this paper, all the foregoing things are defined in the constitution. By defining these roles you are stating the constitution. Any subsequent redefinition, will, *ipso-facto*, change the constitution, if this is at the level of that organ of the state which most concerned with legislative and/or executive functions.

In this sense, it is one form of a constitutional arrangement if the role of the monarch is defined as to embody legislative, judicial and executive actions at their most authoritative levels,. In view of this, such a functionary is also placed at the head of everybody in the state. If his role

is subsequently redefined so as to "separate his powers" into legislative and executive capacities, this, according to my conceptualization would alter the basis of the pre-existing constitution, and would, in my view, amount to a revolutionary change. This is what I see as the relationship between institutional structures and constitutionalism. Alter the structural arrangement within the most authoritative organ of policy formulation in the state, (which one can do by redefining and/or reallocating roles) and you have altered the constitution.

But the relationship between institutional structures, constitution and the political process is not clear or obvious, and would require further explanation. By political process, I simply mean the pattern or mode of taking political decisions, and the specific patterns of political behaviours and characteristics that this engenders. In an arrangement where supreme power is centralised, we will expect different patterns of decision-taking and modes of political behaviour and characteristics, from that arrangement where power is diffused. These differences are what I consider political processes — and these would change, as and when, you change the constitution. The main burden of this paper is to apply these concepts to Borno under the Seifuwa in contrast to Borno under El-Kanemi. This exercise, it is hoped, will reveal to us the specific nature and direction of political change in Borno between the two periods. This would necessitate a systematic study of several arms of government and other related matters. But this cannot be so easy to attempt in a paper of this nature. Nor is it absolutely necessary, as we have already indicated that the main locus of political power is the Council of State, i. e. that organ of government that possesses the most authoritative competence to legislate, and even execute policies for the whole state.

Accordingly, I wish to undertake a comparative study of the Council of State for both the Seifuwa and post-Seifuwa, (that is, El-Kanemi) periods. The procedure I propose to follow is to attempt a structural and functional analysis, of the respective Councils along the following

variables: membership composition, characteristics of members, and their authoritative competence as is defined by the roles they are expected to play. If there are substantial differences between the Seifuwa Council of State and that of El-Kanemi along all or any of these variables, we would conclude that there is a revolution, and would proceed to identify the consequences of this on the political processes that subsequently emerged.

In this attempt we will however be severely handicapped by the paucity of information which precisely identifies the Majlis (As the Council is called in Kanuri), its membership composition and its structure according to the roles of members which alone would tell us the pattern of power relationships, within this crucial organ and help us identify where or in whom, does ultimate political decision-taking resided. The closest we came to this is when Muhammad Nur Alkali emphasised the crucial role the monarch played in political decision-making, but pointed out by stating, that :

“We should not lose sight of the fact that the position of the royal family as the nucleus of the whole political system does not necessarily supercede the importance and influence of the Mai's Council (Majlis) as a decision making body of the state”.³

But even Alkali is imprecise about the membership composition of the Mai's Council and he tells us nothing about the arrangement of their roles structurally, and their respective authoritative competences. Without such precise knowledge we would either be led to over-emphasize the supremacy, and possibly the arbitrariness of the monarch,⁴ or declare as inconsistent the nature and pattern of decision-taking in the Council, as there did not seem to exist a fixed body of officials permanently engaged in the business of formulating policies and taking political decisions for the State as a whole.

In the absence of adequate and accurate information one can only speculate on most aspects of the structure, functions and the operation of the Majlis in the Seifuwa

days. This shortcoming is imposed upon us by two inter-related facts: the inadequacy of our knowledge in the precise function of the Majlis, and the terminological confusion and inexactitude one encounters in our identification of this important arm of government. The Majlis is variously and sometimes even interchangeably termed, the Majlis the Nowuna, the Council and the Court, each of which connotes different functions, and would therefore also connote differing personnal composition and size. Indeed, the Majlis has been identified by various authorities (too numerous to cite) with all the functions these terms connote. But most commonly the Majlis is identified with two important functions : political decision-making (i.e. legislative) and juridical functions (as the Majlis is also said to be the highest Court of Appeal). In this sense, the judicial and legislative functions of government are combined in the same organ. We cannot therefore correctly speak of "the seperation of powers" in Borno. But is this statement in itself correct for the Seifuwa and El-Kanemi regimes? I submit that we cannot adequately answer this question until we identify precisely who the members of the Majlis for both periods were what were their functional competences and qualifications, and what was the structure of their role relationships, which will indicate to us the pattern of decision making in the Majlis.

The Majlis of the Seifuwa Mais.

The clearest information regarding the composition of the Majlis under the Seifuwa is given us by Heinrich Barth, depending on the authority of Imam Ahmed ibn Fartua and al-Makrizi. Barth wrote that the polity of the empire of Borno "which originally was entirely aristocratical *was* based upon the Council of twelve chiefs without whose assent nothing of importance could be undertaken by the king".⁵ Identifying that the kingdom reached the highest stage of its development under the reign of Mai Muhammed ibn Idris (A.D 1526 — 1545) he appended the following list of title-holders as members of the Council :⁶

the Kaigama — commander-in-chief of the Borno Army
 the Yerima — governor of Yeri (north) Province
 the Ghaladima — governor of the Western Provinces
 Chiroma — the heir apparent, son or brother of the king
 the Fuguma — a governor in the interior of gazargumo
 Bagharima — an officer of some importance, could even
 aspire to the throne at times of civil wars,
 but Barth could not identify the pro-
 vince he ruled.

Sinte — a title originally from Kanem, but
 Barth cannot specify his office:
 Kazallama — governor of the eastern provinces of
 Kanem.
 Kabuskema — governor of Kaghusti, a district in
 the western parts of Kanem.
 Arjinoma — a governor of one of the northern pro-
 vinces of the Empire
 Mastrema — Chief eunuch of the harem,
 Yiroma — an office of some importance under
 the Mastrema.

It is significant that despite the considerable antiquity
 of Islam in Borno, this "Chief machinery of the empire",
 did not include in its membership a functionary whose
 particular qualification and duties were juridico-religious.
 If I may say so, the members of Mai Muhammed's Council
 held secular titles, and performed secular, eminently poli-
 tical functions. But traditions abounds with accounts of the
 Mai's Court⁷ in which the primacy of place is given to
 "learned men and Imams"⁸ who "hold disputations before
 the amir... concerning doubtful points of law and dogma,"⁹
 and who after having duly consulted the most celebrated
 text-books of their times, would "pronounce judgement".¹⁰
 This appeared to be the roles of such celebrated "mu'allims"
 and Imams of Birni Gazargamo as the great Masbarma, Omar
 ibn Othman (C.1472 — 1504), and Imam Ahmad ibn Fartua,
 the Chief Imam of Birni in the days of Mai Idris Aloma
 (C.1546 — 1607) Traditional sources appear to indicate
 this again, confirming that there was no real seperation

of powers between the judiciary and executive. It is however, interesting to note that in certain accounts of Birni Courts/Councils we are informed that two eminent men of learning, the Mainin-Kinandi and the Talba were included. In this connection, it is very significant that the title of Mainin-Kinandi when rendered into English, is "second in rank only to the Mai". Does this signify total separation of powers? Perhaps this only indicated that this functionary in particular, and the whole judicial structure of which he is reported to be the head in general, enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy. This is attested to by oral data recently gathered in Borno which state that "in Birni times the Mai would know the Mainin-Kinandi has condemned somebody to death only when the court messengers come to collect burial cloths at the palace".¹¹ It is not unreasonable to assume that such a functionary possesses considerable executive powers in judicial matters. To this extent we can claim *de-facto* separation of powers between the judicial and legislative functions of government in Borno under the Seifuwa. In other words, it is not the physical separation (as separate courts etc.) but the functional separation as can be seen in the differing authoritative competences of the functionaries concerned that appear to us the essence and meaning of the separation of powers.

The El-Kanemi Majlis.

The history and circumstances under which the Sheikh Mohammed El-Amin El-Kanemi emerged onto the Borno political scene at the beginning of the nineteenth century has been studied and reported by various authorities.¹² We do not need to recount these here. But we could profitably proceed to look at the political institutions he created in the hope that this exercise will reveal to us the ways and means by which he successfully created a political regime that so completely replaced the one that ruled Borno for some one thousand years before him. In my view, El-Kanemi's emergence as a political force in Borno can be attributed to "chance", but the establishment of his regime and

dynasty is not quite certainly so. The latter is product of thoughtful and careful reorganization of the Council of State at the following two levels :

- (1) Personnel — by infusing old and new, by reorganizing their structural positions and redefining their roles.
- (2) Constitution — paying some scrupolous attention to constitutionalism, but still reformulating the basis of the constitution.

It is the successful implementation of this basic strategy and the skilful manipulation of its resources in the way of conciliation, management control and motivating achievement which enabled El-Kanemi to establish his regime and dynasty on firm basis so soon after the collapse of the centuries-old Seifuwa dynasty.

Both oral tradition and written sources are agreed that Sheikh Muhammed El-Amin El-Kanemi came into Borno with five close associates : Mallam Terab, Ahmed Gonimi, Ibrahim Wadaima, Haj Sudani and Mallam Tatali¹³ all of these associates are reputed to be accomplished scholars, and El-Kanemi himself is reputed not only for the depth of his scholarship, but also for his stirring qualities of honesty, sincerity and fear of God — qualities which easily recommend one for leadership in a Moslem community.¹⁴

At times of the Fellata troubles in Borno, it was with the aid and collaboration of these five associates and their respective followers that El-Kanemi succeeded in effectively countering the threat which faced Borno and its throne at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The upshot of this particular episode of Borno history is momentous: a complete change of regime and a new dynasty completely replaced that of the Seifuwa.

After attaining political powers, El-Kanemi did not dispense with his five associates-in-scholarship. Rather, he gave them the highest political roles of being members of the "inner" Council, with considerable legislative power,¹⁵ Schultze, obviously drawing from oral tradition which is still being frequently repeated, informs us that when El-

Kanemi decided to establish his Council endowed with appropriate court order and authority he requested for, and obtained forty officials of requisite qualifications from the court of the now impotent Seifuwa Mai to effect the necessary re-organization.¹⁶

Among the officers who came from the Seifuwa Court, he nominated one to be the leader and appointed him as the "Shettima Kanuribe". Lest those who were already with him as the would be alienated, he appointed among them also a "Shettima Karunibe" Others who got appointed to high political office among the Seifuwa title-holders were the Makinta, Zaifada and Digma — in the order of their seniority. El-Kanemi explicitly included in his *Majlis* the two juridical functionaries — the Kadi Mainin-Kinendi and Talba. But their roles were sub-ordinated to those of the "five close associates" and their functions were strictly specified as legal-adviser or "mufti" and court clerk (katibu) respectively.

The Mainin-Kinandi and the Talba, though subordinate to "the five" were placed higher in this Council than the Shettima Kanuribe and the other Birni title holders. Included also in the *Majlis* were the two highest military title-holders — Kaigamas — though their roles appeared to be limited to purely policing duties.

Others who appear to be consulted, but not properly constituted as members of the *Majlis*, were the Chief Imam and other learned Ulama in the Capital. Thus, one can roughly sketch the organizational structure of the emergent *Majlis* as follows :

THE SHEHU

<i>Ahmed</i>	<i>Mallam</i>	<i>Terab</i>	<i>Ibrahim</i>	<i>Haj</i>	<i>Mallam</i>
<i>Gonimi</i>			<i>Wadaima</i>	<i>Sudani</i>	<i>Tatali</i>

EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS

<i>MAININ-KINANDI</i> (<i>Legal-Adviser</i>)	
<i>TALBA</i>	(<i>Scribe</i>)

<i>Shettima</i>	<i>Kanuribe</i>
<i>Makinta</i>	
<i>Zaifada</i>	
<i>Digma</i>	

KAIGAMA

KAIGAMA

Imams and Learned Men

Procedure In The El-Kanemi Majlis

As can be clearly seen, the El-Kanemi Majlis was a fusion of trusted followers and representatives of such interested parties — the nobility of Birni origin, as well as of the religious and intellectual class in the person of the Mainin-Kinandi and Talba. The Majlis was clearly equipped to undertake both the functions of legislature as well as those of administering justice. Indeed, informants cannot be drawn to distinguish these two functions, and are, in fact, most unequivocal on the latter function, seeing the Majlis as the highest court of appeal for the whole state. It is this function which also brings out more clearly the pattern of power relationship that emerged as a result of the above re-organization.

As the highest Court of Appeal, cases were normally referred to the Majlis from the lower Courts. Sometimes, aggrieved citizens could directly lay their complaints to the Majlis. Certain categories of cases, notably murder and land-disputes, were only dealt with by the Majlis. These according to informants "impinge upon the sphere of politics,"¹⁷ and the Majlas was the only competent organ of State to deal with them. In the Majlis hearing procedure was the same as it was in the lower Courts; both parties in the dispute had to state their case and wait for the verdict after deliberations by members. The procedure of decision making is what I consider very revealing, as it is this which bares open the power — relationships operating among members. When a case was being heard the Talba, a scribe had to make three copies of the minutes. The Mainin Kinandi acted as legal-adviser only.

The five close followers : Malam Terab, Ahmed Gonimi, Ibrahim Wadama, Haj Sudani and Mallam Tatali would then deliberate on the case and declare a judgement. Final approval had to come from the monarch himself, after submitting the gist of the case through, first the Digma, then the Zaifada and the Makinta — depending on how long the monarch remained adamant and refused to accept the verdict of his Councillors. Should the monarch resist to endorse the verdict, the Shettima Kanuri would invite the monarch into the council chambers "for consultations with his councillors." At this stage it was necessary to cast votes and that of the monarch counted for two and each of the Councillors' counted for one only. The outcome was binding on all, but should the votes split even, then the matter was referred to "the learned mu'allims and Imams" of the land, who after due perusal of the minutes of the case and due consultation with "the celebrated textbooks on *Sharia* would assemble in front of the Friday Mosque and publicly declare their verdict. This verdict was binding on all."¹⁸

The proceedings in the El-Kanemi, Council reveals to us the following characteristics :

- (1) that the most authoritative voices were those of the political appointees i.e. the "five close associates" and ultimately, that of the Shehu El-Kanemi himself.
- (2) Significantly, such religious and juridical professionals as the Talba and Mainin-Kinandi had absolutely no executive or legislative powers, their roles being limited to giving legal advice as and when required, and acting as court scribes.

It thus appears that in El-Kanemis Council legislative functions and judicial functions were exercised by the same political functionaries. To this extent therefore, El-Kanemi had clearly introduced a revolutionary change that altered the basis of the pre-existing constitution.

We can also note that in El-Kanemi's Council those officials who possessed the most authoritative functions were not from the Seifuwa Court but persons who were his closest associated and who paid special allegiance to him as they owed their rise to pre-eminence to him.

It is this aspect of the El-Kanemis Council and the criteria he is used for selecting his most, powerful functionaries (personal loyalty and competence) which has generally been identified as the source of El-Kanemi's power. It was also the spring-board for the more powerful processes of centralization compared to those of the Seifuwa.

Centralization no doubt facilitated personal rule, and therefore, laid the foundation for the establishment of an effective regime and, in this particular instance, a dynasty.

CONCLUSIONS

The substantive findings and conclusions of this paper are tentative. It is quite clear that a more assiduous research effort must be applied to the institution we have attempted to examine (i.e. the *Majlis* or the Council of State) and especially to find out the composition of its membership, accurate details of their duties, functions and authoritative competence before we can conclusively determine whether or not El-Kanemi had fundamentally

changed the constitutional basis of the Borno polity. Nonetheless, we cannot fail to observe and draw the conclusions that by giving the most authoritative voice to those closest to him in the Council of State — (Ahmed Gonimi, Ibrahim Wadaima, Mallam Terab, Mallam Tatali and Haj Sudani), El-Kanemi has ensured the establishment of his regime on a firm basis, as these functionaries would be the least likely to disagree with him on any major issue. The infusion into the *Majlis* of professional jurists like the Mainin-Kinendi and Talba, demonstrated El-Kanemis desire to retain the essentially Islamic and *Sharia* orientation of the Borno constitution. But constitutionalists usually appear threatening to usurping regimes, and we must consider it an act of political astuteness that El-Kanemi did not give overriding powers to the professional jurists in his council. That El-Kanemi included into his *Majlis* other Birni title holders like the Shettima Kanuribe, Makinta and the Zaifada is no less and astute act. It is a positive strategy of conciliation, offering hope and therefore attraction to all those who might still be lamenting the demise of the Seifuwa. Thus, by carefully re-organizing the composition of the *Majlis* and giving overriding powers to those closest to him El-Kanemi had firmly laid the foundation of a new regime and dynasty. That this regime collapsed before the turn of the 20th century is due to several factors outside the scope of this study. Suffice to say that informants state that El-Kanemis immediate successors, Umar, had failed to adhere to the strict procedure of the *Majlis* and he tended to move towards a more authoritarian rule.

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14. This being so, I am not surprised, as Brenner seemed to be, that El-Kanemi was so easily accepted as a leader by the Borno citizenry.
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THE 19th CENTURY GALADIMAS OF BORNO.

by

Abdulkadir Benisheikh

The nineteenth century marked a watershed in the history of Borno. The period witnessed the demise of the one thousand year old Seifuwa dynasty and its replacement by the Kanemi; and this dynastic change provided a leverage for socio-political changes which, to some extents, were revolutionary in nature. However, what is of immediate interest to this author is the political aspect of the revolution. The dynastic change accompanied by a reshuffling of the political institutions of the empire under the Seifuwa brought about functional changes to some offices, some completely disappeared, and some new offices also emerged. These changes were no doubt made possible by the increased power of the central authority represented by the Kanemi Shehus as compared to the Seifuwa Mais but the changes in themselves had the consequent effect of further increasing the powers of the ruler, since recruitment to offices in the new political order was based on loyalty rather than birth. Thus, under the active rule of al-Kanemi and later his son Umar, the empire's central authority became overwhelmingly powerful at the expense of its client and vassals. And, it is against this background that this essay attempts to investigate into the role of the office of the Galadima in nineteenth century Borno. In other words, the essay seeks to examine the extent, if any, to which the nineteenth century political changes in Borno had effects on the office. But such an enquiry is not feasible without some idea about the nature of the institution in pre-nineteenth century Borno and a resume of the functions attached to the office of the Galadima under the Seifuwa is, I think, here in order.

The Office of the Galadima Under the Seifuwa.

Although the office of the Galadima is often associated, by assumption, with the early history of Seifuwa rule, it now seems clear that the emergence of the office did not precede the seventeenth century. The first Galadima was established at Birni Nguru sometimes about 1630 A.D. in the reign of Mai Hadj Umar Ibn Idris (1621/2 — 1641/2 A.D.)¹. The emergence of the office of the Galadima can definitely be correlated with the period of Bornoan expansion west and south-west of the *Komadugu Yobe*. It is known that Idris Aloma had undertaken a number of expeditions against the western Ngizim (Bindwa) as well as the southern Ngizim and ultimately forced them to submission.² The Bedde and Lere were also subdued by Idris Aloma; and most probably, the ancient kingdoms of Shira and Teshena first came under Bornoan authority at this time.³ The establishment of the Galadima a politico-military official at Birni Nguru around 1630 A.D. seems therefore to have been a device partly for mustering, more easily, the exploits of Idris Aloma a generation earlier, and partly as a base for further expansion. At the present state of our knowledge, we can virtually say nothing about the role of successions of Galadimas in the extension of Bornoan imperial authority. What we know, and this is based on oral tradition and an extant *Chronicle of the Galadimas*, is that the office of the Galadima was vested with authority over all territories "from the western gates of Birni Gazargamo to the Kwara (River Niger)".⁴ From the available evidence, shorn of exaggerations, we can deduce that the Galadima was vested with authority of one kind or the other over all the vassal and client states of the Borno empire to the west and north-west of the Komadugu Yobe. By and large the authority of the Galadima within this broad geo-political sphere was basically supervisory in nature; but it seems most probable that the smaller polities owed direct vassalage to the Galadima. There is as yet nothing to indicate any form of political connection between the Galadimas of Borno and the states of central Hausaland most of which had come (at varying times) into

either tributary or client relationship with Borno between the fifteen and early nineteenth centuries; and this clearly represents our present state of knowledge about the actual nature of Borno's political relations with Hausaland.⁵

The Galadima occupied a unique position in the imperial hierarchy of pre-nineteenth century Bornoan government. As a politico-military official of the empire with mandatory authority over the western Borno empire, the Galadima also ranked next to the Mai in the imperial hierarchy. The Galadima was accorded a large measure of autonomy so much so that he appeared more of a sub-imperial ruler than a mere official of the Bornoan government. In fact, the Galadimaship had always been associated with all symbols of royal power and prestige. Thus besides residing in his own capital, the Galadima also maintained an independent army. Secondly, the Galadima has his own elaborate court, composed, as in the imperial capital of Borno, of princely and slave title holders. Thirdly, the hereditary nature of the office based on a clearly defined system of succession, also gave the office a semblance at least, of royalty and a measure of autonomy.

The military functions of the Galadima included also the maintenance of security along the trade routes running east to west between Borno and Hausaland, and from Borno south-westwards through Daniski to the Gongola region. The Galadima levied tolls on the merchants plying the highways and the substantial income derived from this must have re-enforced the power and prestige of the office.

The Jihad of Dan Fodio In Western Borno.

Early in the nineteenth century, the politico-military function of the Galadima as the "warden" of the western Borno empire met with a disastrous challenge in the form of a Fellata uprising. The initial aim of the Fellata in Western Borno was not so much as a direct attack on the Borno kingdom as the establishment of emirate governments on its ill-administered periphery.⁶ This process began in the dry season of 1804 — 5 with the activities of Ardo Abdure (or Abdure) and (later) Ardo Lerlima. Defying the authority

of the Galadima, Abdua, a pastoral Fellata of Rinde (near Auyo) began to foray in the surrounding countryside, and consequently Abdua's connection with Sarkin Auyo, Jibrin, became an uneasy one. However, on the death of Abdua in c. 1805, his two sons, Umar ibn Abdure and Sambo Digimsa obtained a flag from Sheikh Usman ibn Fodio and began to escalate the conflict, as a 'jihad' against all local Habe Sarakuna.⁷

The Fellata, led by Umar ibn Abdure, Sambo and their junior brother Yusufu, and supported also by a few of the indigenous Rinde population (Rindawa) first subjugated a number of the towns under Auyo and then took Auyo itself with the assistance of Sarki Jibrin's eldest son and then proceeded to compel the submission of Hadejia and three other Habe chiefdoms nearby — Gatarwa, Garun Gabas and Kazura.⁸

As the Galadima was the overlord of the Habe states that later came to form the Fellata emirate of Hadejia, the activities of Umar ibn Abdure and his brothers thus constituted a direct affront to the Galadima's authority. And, the initial attempt by the Galadima to contain the activities of ibn Abdure and his brothers only served to provoke a "sympathetic" rebellion from another group of Fellata led by Ardo Lerlima (or Dardin) of Marmar, who was a cousin to Abdure. Ardo Lerlima probably intercepted the Galadima's force sent against Umar ibn Abdure and brothers, and forcing it to retreat. Ardo Lerlima then moved on Birni Nguru launching a direct offensive against the Galadima. Subsequently, the Galadima was forced out of his capital to seek aid from his liege lord, the Mai of Borno. The conflict had by now definitely taken an alarming dimension and necessitated counter-action by the Mai of Borno himself. Hence, Mai Ahmad supported by the Galadima, Dunama, launched a counter offensive against Marmar, defeated Lerlima and force him to flee. However when the Borno army encountered Umar ibn Abdure (who, it appears, had marched towards Marmar to avenge Lerlima) it suffered a catastrophic reversal of fortune. Ibn Abdure inflicted a sound defeat on Mai Ahmed and caused the

Borno army a severe loss, several of the Borno leaders being killed, including the Waziri and Galadima Dunama;⁹ the latter is said to have been buried at Daggana (in present-day Hadejia Emirate of Kano State) between Maimar and Birni Nguru.¹⁰ After this defeat, Mai Ahmed retreated towards Birni Gazargamo. The Fellata also hotly pursued their victory and sacked Birni Nguru, the capital of the Galadima in c. 1807. The Fellata invasion from the West was carried to as far as Waro (to the north-east of Birni Nguru) and there, Waroma Kiari, a vassal of the Galadima, was killed with about seventy of his men in the defence of the town. Waro also suffered the fate of Birni Nguru.¹¹

While these developments were going on in parts of western Borno, dark clouds had also been gathering in the other parts of the west, precisely the south-west (in the region of present-day Katagum "Emirate") and southern Borno, in present-day Gujba district of Borno. Spurred by the easy victories of Umar Ibn Abdure, another Fellata leader, Ibrahim Zaki, organised an uprising from his base at Shel-lim, a major Lerewa town on the Shira/ Udubo frontier, in later-day Katagum Emirate. Here, Ibrahim Zaki gathered a considerable following, composed mainly of the Lerewa but also the Fellata and made an unsuccessful attack on Udubo. In the wake of the initial reverse, Ibrahim Zaki sought a new field of operations in the Auyo/Teshena region which was already being menaced by Umar ibn Abdure and his brothers. Ibrahim Zaki and his nephew, Dan Kawu, now allied with the family of Abdure, may have taken part in the latter's conquest of Auyo town. It is also probable that Ibrahim Zaki and Dan Kawu did receive armed assistance from Umar ibn Abdure's group, when about the same year (c.1805 — 1806) they conquered the Teshena kingdom. With Teshena as his military headquarters, Ibrahim Zaki then proceeded to subjugate the *Habe* rulers of the number of polities that lay within the territories of present-day Katagum and Misau emirates.¹² And, soon after the fall of Birni Nguru, the western Fellata, another Fellata, leader, Gwoni Mukhtar, also rose in the south, launched a northward bound offensive

sive against Birni Gazargamo and captured the Borno capital after defeating the Kaigama — the Commander-in-chief of the Borno army. Birni Gazargamo capitulated in c. 1808; the Fellata sacked the city and then occupied it. This had been the state of affairs when Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi appeared in the scene to deliver Borno from the Fellata. But it took about four years (c. 1808 — 1812) of success and counter-success between al-Kanemi and the Fellata leaders before the former could accomplish the defeat of the latter. The defeat of the Fellata in Borno was however not accomplished without territorial losses on Borno's side.

With the restoration of peace, the Galadima's court was established at Borsari, in consequence, perhaps, of a new policy of shortening lines of communication between the new imperial capital (Birni Kafela) and the outposts for defensive purposes.¹³ In any case by now the office of the Galadima had been discredited and shorn of vast powers since the territories lost by Borno to the Fellata in the west had hitherto all been under the authority of the Galadima. It is not therefore improbable that the new succession of Galadimas came to find the diminutive status of the office so unbearable. And, the series of misunderstandings between the Galadimas and the rulers of Borno in the first half of the nineteenth century can only be explained in terms of the Galadimas' defiance of the new political order. Thus, according to the *Chronicle of the Galadimas*, Galadima Ganama (c. 1807 — 1814/15) was conspired upon by the courtiers when he went to Birni Kafela for the 'Id; he was detained and later executed. His successor, Galadima Gumsumi (c. 1814/15 — 1817/18) was also to "quarell" with the Mai and had to run away.¹⁴ As will shortly be seen, this misunderstanding was to develop into an overt collision between al-Kanemi then the de facto ruler of Borno and Galadima Umar in c. 1830.

By the time of Gumsumi's successor, Galadima Kiari (1817/18 — 1824/5), the capital of the Galadimas was transferred from Borsari to Burburwa (now in Niger) far to the north-west. This move was taken, according to an

informant, to curb the increasing wave of Tuareg raids into Borno from the north-west.¹⁵ Thus, the transfer of the Galadimas' capital to Burburwa can be seen in the light of a new military strategy against the aged-old tradition of Tuareg depredations, which by now must have had been exarcerbated by the decline of the Borno Empire. But it is also probable that the shift of the Galadima's court to Burburwa was made to have a closer surveillance over Munio and Damagaram, both of which as age-long dependencies of Borno were rising about this time.

Galadima Umar. (1826/7 — 1830/31; 1832/3 — 1865/6)

Galadima Umar son of Galadima Dunama (d.1807) was undoubtedly the greatest of the nineteenth century Galadimas. Umar first became Galadima at Burburwa but he was later on to move his court to Bundi, about twenty-five miles north-east of present-day Nguru. Oral accounts suggest that the southward shift of the Galadimas' capital was forced by the arid conditions of Burburwa's location.¹⁶ However, with the opening of the East-West trade routes after the cessation of hostilities between the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno in the late 1820s, it seems probable that the Galadima shifted his capital southwards for the exploitation of the East-West commerce. In any case, it was at Bundi that the earlier misunderstanding between the Galadimas and the rulers of Borno came to a head; and Galadima Umar was to pitch battle against al-Kanemi who was then the de facto ruler of Borno.

The ostensible cause of the conflict was over the Galadima's execution of Dan Hauwa, a deposed ruler of Gumel. The accounts relate that when Dan Hauwa, (then the ruler of Gumel and a "vassal" of Borno) was called upon by al-Kanemi to accompany him on an expedition against the Emirate of Hadejia, Dan Hauwa sent back an open refusal to follow the orders of al-Kanemi and consequently, the latter undertook to launch a punitive expedition against Gumel. Hence, a year after the campaign against Hadejia (1827), al-Kanemi accompanied by Galadima Umar marched against Malawa, the capital of Gumel. Dan Hauwa,

unable to put up resistance, made a quick submission even before he was besieged; but he was nonetheless deposed and his brother, Muhammadu Dan Tanoma, was appointed in his place by al-Kanemi. Dan Hauwa was then handed over to Galadima Umar for custody.¹⁷

In retrospect, it should be mentioned that although Gumel fell under the jurisdiction of the Galadima within the frame-work of Bornoan imperial administration, Dan Hauwa (1811 — 1828) had never acknowledged the authority of the Galadima¹⁸ and his successor Dan Tanoma was also ordered by al-Kanemi to owe his allegiance direct to Yerima (later Shehu) Umar, al-Kanemi's son.¹⁹ Therefore, when Dan Hauwa was handed over to Galadima Umar for "custody", the Galadima gave vent to his wrath against Dan Hauwa by summarily executing him in total defiance of al-Kanemi's orders.²⁰ The intriguing man he was — as Barth well observed²¹ — Galadima Umar himself had not fully accepted the authority of al-Kanemi²² and the seemingly minor incidence of Dan Hauwa's execution provided enough excuse for al-Kanemi to humiliate the defiant Galadima. In fact, it is suggestive that al-Kanemi, knowing fully well the tensed relations between the Galadima and Dan Hauwa might have deliberately handed over the latter to the Galadima and with due calculations on the inevitable consequence and awaited the desired excuse for a show of might against the insubordinate Galadima.

Galadima Umar's attitude towards al-Kanemi was however only part of the widespread phenomenon of insubordination al-Kanemi had had to contend with before his authority came to be placed on a firm footing in Borno. In fact, the Manga (an ethnic group closely associated with the Galadimas) were, in general loathe to acknowledge the authority of al-Kanemi.²³ Thus, in 1823 al-Kanemi had to wage a punitive expedition against the Manga of Maine (in north-central Borno) led by one Mallam Fannami, before they could be brought down to submission.²⁴

A year after his campaign against Gumel (1829), al-Kanemi therefore launched his autumn campaign against Galadima Umar.²⁵ The Galadima on the other hand had

not only determined to resist al-Kanemi, but also called upon his subordinates, the rulers of Munio and Damagaram to ignore al-Kanemi's authority and join him in the resistance. But only Kosso a deposed ruler of Munio answered the call of the Galadima and joined him at Bundi.²⁶ The Borno army laid a protracted siege on Bundi, but ultimately forced the Galadima to flee. Galadima Umar first fled to Hadejia and thence to Sokoto²⁷ where he most probably offered his allegiance to the Caliphate in return for Sokoto's military aid in his bid to carve out his own emirate.²⁸ But then relations between Borno and Sokoto by that time were, if not cordial, certainly peaceful and therefore, as might be expected, nothing came out of Galadima Umar's mission to Sokoto. Nevertheless, the Galadima's return from his one year self-exile at Sokoto must have been made possible by his reconciliation with al-Kanemi with a plea from the Caliph at Sokoto on Umar's behalf. In any case, Umar had to be confined for one year at Dikwa before he was fully pardoned and reinstated as Galadima, to replace the incumbent, his son Dunama. By now, however, the office of the Galadima had been divested of much of its remaining power and influence — as the penalty of rebellion. Earlier on al-Kanemi had already made Gumel independent of the Galadima²⁹ and after the Bundi war, the dependencies of Munio and Damagaram were also granted the same autonomy as Gumel.³⁰ To the north-west of Bundi, al-Kanemi also created a chiefdom, centred at Gumsi, and appointed as its chief, Shafune, a deposed Mai of Machena. The chiefdom of Gumsi was established as specifically independent of the Galadima's authority and directed to owe allegiance straight to al-Kanemi.³¹ East of present-day Nguru district, the number of military posts (ribats) — notably Borsari, Zurikullo and Alanjurori — that had been established early in the century as a new strategy against the Fellata, were also territorially enlarged at the definite expense of the Galadima.³² At the same time, the Galadima lost even the nominal authority over the Beddes — to the east. For, the Bedde chief of the Gidgid clan, Babuje, was accorded recognition as an autonomous chief (Lawan) over all

the Beddes by al-Kanemi, as a reward for his assistance in the campaign against Galadima Umar. Subsequently Lawan Babuje organised and headed a Pan-Bedde confederation which to all intents resisted all raids and other interferences from both Borno and the Fellata emirate of Hadejia throughout the century. The Bedde chiefdom of Tagali however refused to join the confederacy and for some times enjoyed and independent existence until it was made to pay the penalty of its insularity by being subdued in c. 1883 by Galadima Mammadu Kellumi³³. And, for the rest of the century, Tagali remained the only Bedde centre under the Galadima.

From the Bundi war onwards, the office of the Galadima and what territory remained under it, seemed to have been isolated from the mainstream of events in metropolitan Borno. The Galadimas continued to exercise considerable autonomy and the territory of the Galadima became as it were a dependent state. But as the century progressed the Galadimas became less and less powerful. By the 1850s the most powerful among Borno's dependencies in the north-west was Munio.³⁴ This power later shifted to Damagaram with her conquest of Munio in the early 1870s.³⁵ In the 1890s Damagaram was to further aggrandise herself with the wholesale conquest of north-western Borno; and the years marked the eclipse of the Galadimas who became "vassals" to their one-time subordinate.

The Galadimas under Damagaram.

The reign of Tanimu b. Suleiman in Damagaram (c. 1851 — 84) was one of vigorous territorial expansions, and this expansionist policy was carried out partly at the expense of Borno herself. Thus in the 1870s Damagaram conquered Munio and the Sosebaki dependencies of Borno. This policy on the part of Damagaram was not discountenanced by Borno; probably because it did not amount to a rebellion against Borno as it seems that tribute from Munio (as well as the Sosebaki states) continued to be paid to the Shehu.³⁶ On the other hand, Borno's passivity might be indicative of her internal decline and inability to check the ambitions of Damagaram.

It is however definite that Damagaram's further expansion eastwards in the 1890s was facilitated by the political upheaval within Borno following Rabeh's invasion; and hence, Damagaram carried out a wholesale conquest of the region with impunity. In 1895 the Damagaramma Ahmadu overran the province of Machena; and forty days later sacked Nguru Ngilewa, forcing the Galadima, Mammadu Kellumi, to flee.³⁷ He was however pursued and captured at Borsari by Sule, Sarkin Shanu of Damagaram. The captive was then mounted on a mare, as a symbolic act of humiliation and taken to Zinder where he was summarily executed.³⁸

In Nguru there still survives a tradition which views Damagaram's attack on the Galadima as an act of treachery for, it is said, the Galadima had had a full pledge of non-aggression from Amir Ahmadu.³⁹ But taking into consideration the fact that the Galadima had also some form of communication with Rabeh,⁴⁰ it would not seem far-fetched to suggest that Damagaramma Ahmadu's action was prompted by the projected alliance between Rabeh and the Galadima. Thus, Ahmadu's attack on the Galadima could be considered as a pre-emptive act. But, whatever was the actual cause of Damagaramma Ahmadu's action, Rabeh made no efforts to avenge his "vassal" — Galadima Mammadu — and consequently, the next three Galadimas were to be appointees of Damagaram.

Galadima Kyari (c.1895 — 97).

Succeeded his brother, Mammadu Kellumi. He established his court at Dagmo (some eight miles east of Nguru Ngilewa); Since the former capital had been left in ruins by the Damagaram invaders. Kyari, however, remained in office for only two years and then imprisoned by Ahmadu as a result of a conspiracy hatched by the Damagaram courtiers against the Galadima. It is said that the conspiracy was aroused by jealousy because of the Galadima's performance of some military feats on the occasion of Damagaram's expedition against the Jahun Fulani of Damagaram's batta in Kano emirate. The Galadima was subsequently

arrested at Dagmo and thrown into gaol at Zinder where he languished for some two years, until he was released by the French following their occupation of Zinder in 1899.

Galadima Ibram (c.1897 — 99).

He established his court at Kachellari — about seven miles north-east of Ngilewa. Here, the Galadima was invaded by a foraging party of Rabeh's troops, led by Sheikh Dab, one of Rabeh's regimental commanders.

Ibram's appointment was however regarded by his subjects as "unconstitutional" since his father, Kachella Dawua (the son of the famous Galadima Umar) had never been in office. Ibram was nevertheless put into office by Damagaram because his loyalty could be ensured as his mother was a Damagaram princess — Ahmadu's sister. In spite of this however, Ibram seized the opportunity provided by the French occupation of Zinder in 1899 and withdrew his allegiance to Damagaram. Soon after, Kyari who had been detained at Zinder and released by the French returned and made an unsuccessful bid to wrest power from Ibram. In fact, Kyari's release by the French smacks of a bargain in which the French sought to extend their sphere beyond the Say — Barua line as fixed by the Anglo-French conventions of April, 1890 and June, 1898. And, this appears more obvious so as after Kyari's abortive attempt, the French aided and abetted Damagaram to reconquer the Galadima's territory in 1901.⁴¹

Galadima Gambo (1901 — 02).

The third and last appointee of Damagaram, and the brother of Ibram. He held office for only eleven months and was then deposed by the Shehu following the establishment of British control over Borno. Ibram, who had taken refuge in the Borno court at Dikwa and had fought against Fad-al-Allah was then restored to office in 1902.

SUMMARY

The early nineteenth century Fellata rebellion in Western Borno exposed the vulnerability of Borno's defence

arrangement in that area. The Galadima as the defender of western Borno failed to stand to the challenge posed by the Fellata rebellion. The consequence of the 'Jihad' in Borno was a considerable loss of territory to the Fellata. As their territories had hitherto been under the supervisory control of the Galadima, the aftermath of the Jihad in Borno saw the office of the Galadima discredited and shorn of vast territorial authority. The new succession of Galadimas therefore resented the diminutive status of the office and this development led to a series of conflicts between the Galadimas and the central administration in Borno. The earlier conflicts give "perhaps a glimpse of the international political ferment which must have characterised the period" in which power was gradually being transferred from the Seifuwa Mais to al-Kanemi. However, in the conflict between al-Kanemi and Galadima Umar, it is evident that the office of the Galadima had now assumed a dysfunctional role. Hence, after subduing Galadima Umar, al-Kanemi had to further reduce the authority of the Galadima. The office itself survived probably because at Kanemi had to conciliate the Manga. And, henceforward, what remained of the territory under the Galadima became a dependant state and provided itself as a sort of buffer state for metropolitan Borno; and the evidence for this was their establishment and strengthening of the *ribats* east of the Galadima's territory. Thus, Barth travelling in the area in the middle of the century did not consider himself in Borno proper until he reached Zurikullo (one of the *ribats* some two days' march east of Bundi — the Galadima's capital.⁴³

Under the Kanemi Shehus, the office of the Galadima thus fell into insignificance, and in the second half of the century, the Galadimas became weaker and weaker, until they were eclipsed by their subjection to Damagaram in the last decade of the century. That the Galadima (when he visited the Borno capital) was accorded the inique privilege of sitting in front of the Shehu facing the same direction in between the two rows of the nobles of the realm did not reflect in any way the importance of the office under

the Kanemi Shehus. This was a court tradition of the Seifuwa actually reflecting the status of the office and had survived under the Shehus in a ceremonial form. The office of the Galadima was in fact removed from the decision-making body of Bornoan government, and this further isolated the Galadimas from the central administration. The Galadima as a territorial governor was not a "fiefholder" as the other officials of the Bornoan government came to be under the Shehus. The Galadima-Shehu relationship was thus one between a vassal and a suzerain and so long as the Galadima paid his annual tribute to the Shehu, he was left uninterfered.

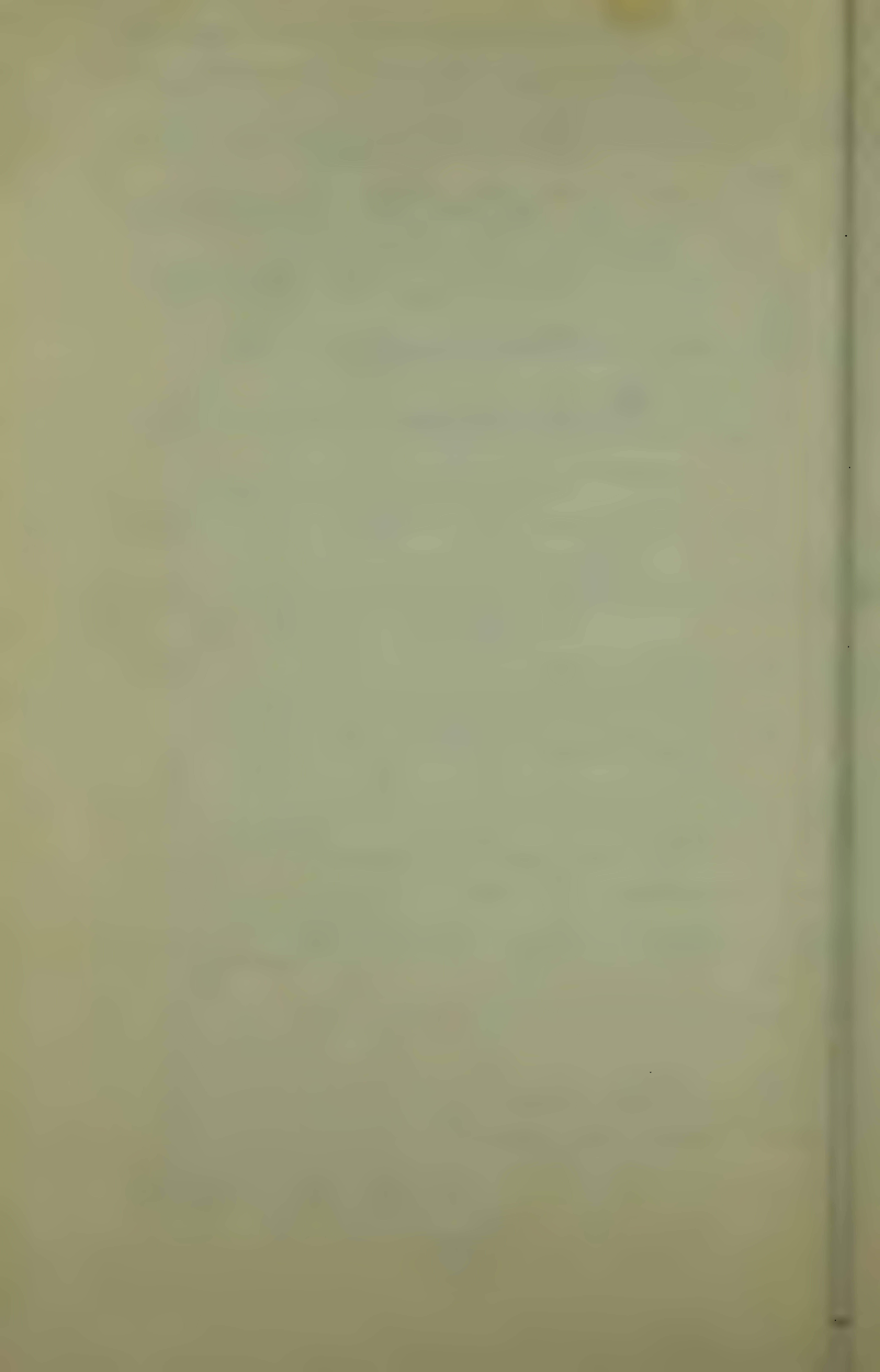
Within metropolitan Bornu, the Shehus wielded the power of allocation and redistribution of fiefs among the officials of the government, and it was only within this area that the "feudal" "structure of Kanuri government" operated.⁴⁴ The Shehus continued to ensure the loyalty and support of the government officials by virtue solely of their monopoly of distribution and re-allocation of fiefs. The loyalty of the Galadima to the Shehus on the other hand was based on force, and indeed it is even difficult to fit the office of the Galadima into the structure of Bornoan government under the Shehus. Before the nineteenth century, the Seifuwa Mais did not find it difficult to ensure the loyalty of the Galadima, since in the Mai-Galadima power relationship it was the Galadima who needed the support of the Mai's power in exercising his supervisory control over the western dependencies of the empire.

The office of the Galadima did survive the 19th century "revolutionary" change in Borno but under the Kanemi Shehus, the office became insignificant compared to what it had been before the nineteenth century.

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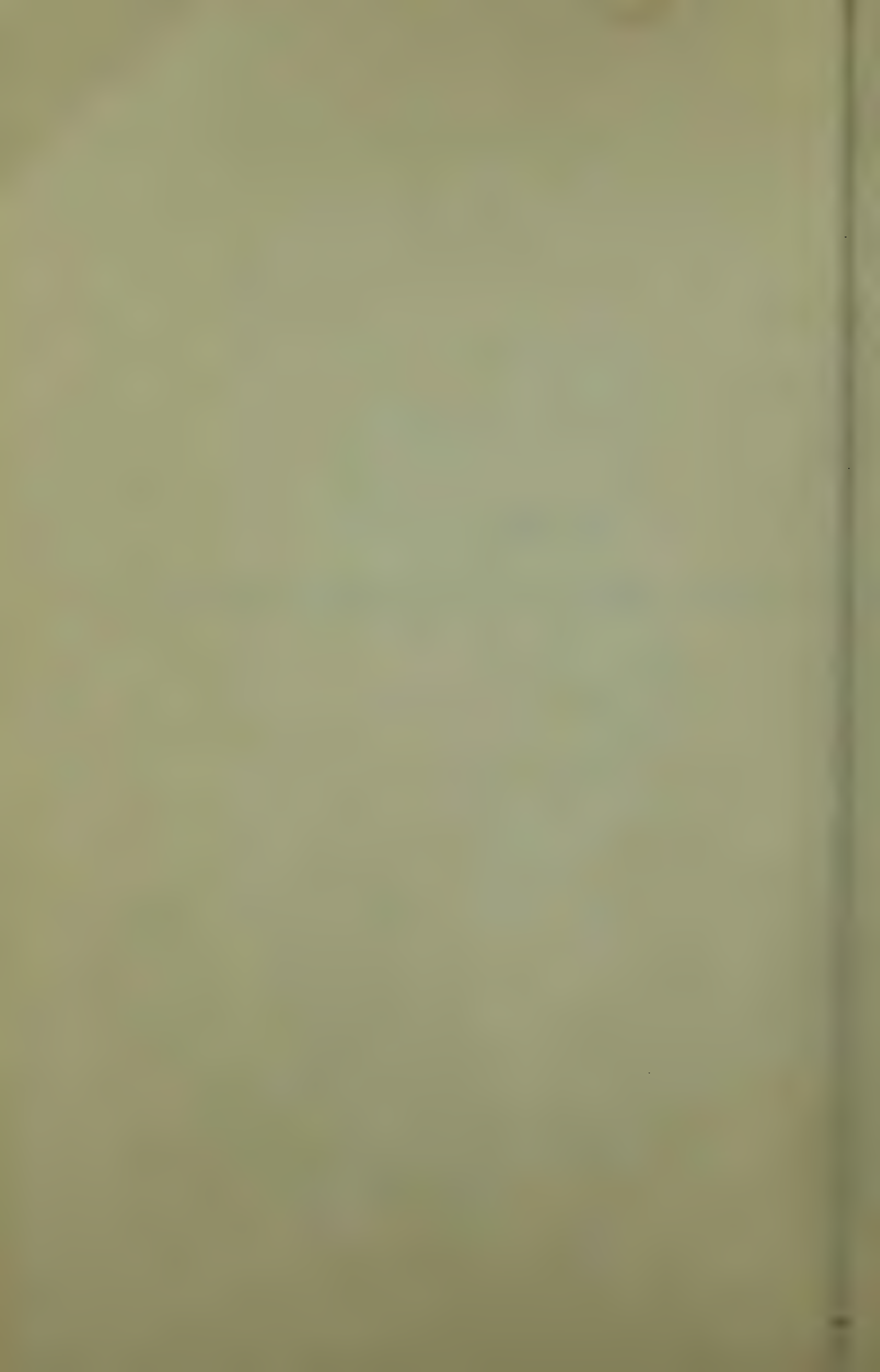
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SECTION D.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.



CHAPTER VIII

SOME DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE OF THE SEIFUWA MAIS OF BORNO WITH EGYPT, TURKEY AND MOROCCO.

by
Muhammad Al-Hajj

Introduction.

Diplomatic relations of Kanem-Borno with other Muslim state in North Africa and the Middle East may be traced back to the eleventh century, the period in which the conversion of the dynasty took place. The chronicles state that the first ruler of Kanem to adopt Islam was Humai b. Selemma, the twelfth mai, who is assigned to the late eleventh century.¹ Dunama, the successor of Humai, performed the pilgrimage to the Holy Lands twice and was drowned in the Red Sea on his way for the third time.² Henceforward pilgrimage became customary among the rulers of Kanem-Borno until the fall of the dynasty in the nineteenth century. This is evident from the large number of those who are credited with the title "al-Hajj" in the king lists. Relations with Egypt.

We may with some confidence say that in the course of their journeys to the Holy Lands and back the Mais of Kanem-Borno established diplomatic relations with the rulers of the countries through which they passed. There is evidence that by the middle of the thirteenth century Kanem maintained friendly relations with Tunisia and Egypt. Ibn Khaldun gives an interesting account of an embassy from Kanem which arrived in the year 655 (A.D. 1257) in Tunis with a rich present for al-Mustansir, the founder of the Hafsid dynasty.³ Al-Maqrizi provides us with an independent evidence of the development of Kanem's external relations with Egypt at about the same time. In his description of the schools which flourished in Egypt at his time, he mentions the madrasa of a certain Ibn Rashiq and adds :

"This Maliki school which is situated in the Hamam al-Rish quarter in the city of Cairo was built by the Kanimiyyun, a nation among the Takrur. When they arrived in Cairo about the year 640 (1242/43) on their way to perform the pilgrimage they gave the qadi Alam al-Din b. Rashiq some amount of money with which he built the school. There he taught in it and so it was called after him. This school acquired great reputation in Bilad al-Takrur and continued to receive money from the people of these countries almost every year."⁴

Al-^c Umari adds the interesting information that the school also contained a hostel in which the students and pilgrims from Kanem resided.⁵

The fourteenth century witnessed the beginning of a period of dynastic struggle, involving the conflict between the Bulala and the Seifuwa and the withdrawal of the latter from the original territory east of Lake Chad westward into the region which eventually became modern Bornu. To this period belongs the letter of Uthman Biri b. Idris to Barquq, the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt.⁶ It would appear that the Judham Arabs mentioned in the letter were the descendants of the Banu Hilal who were deported from Egypt by the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir, two centuries previously, and the ancestors of the present-day Shuwa tribes of Borno and Chad Republic. They migrated from Fezzan to Kanem in the fourteenth century and contributed to the outbreak of the Bulala wars.

The dynastic struggle continued through the fifteenth century until a new power emerged in the person of Al-Gaji who is traditionally regarded as one of the three greatest rulers of Kanem-Borno—the other two being Dunama Dabbalemi and Idris Aloma.⁷ This Mai who flourished in the last quarter of the fifteenth century defeated the Bulala in a series of campaigns and thus prepared the way for the final destruction of their power by his successors. He is also credited with the building of Birnin Gazargamu which was to become the capital of the Seifuwa until the nineteenth century.

During the period of civil strife described above, relations of Borno with the outside world seem to have been in decline. The Bulala appear to have outstripped the Seiuwa in diplomatic contacts with Egypt through their association with the Judham Arabs.

In the sixteenth century, however, the rulers of Borno made vigorous efforts to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with Tripoli and beyond. An anonymous French surgeon who wrote a history of Tripoli in the late seventeenth century while he was being held captive there, gives an interesting account of Borno-Tripoli relations in the middle of the sixteenth century :

..... The reputation of Dragut⁸ continued to grow. Because of his glorious exploits his name was famous throughout Africa, so that Mai, King of Borno sent an ambassador to him. Mai Mussa the predecessor of this prince had maintained a commercial connection with certain Moors of Tripoli since the time when the Knights of Malta were in command there and through them he was being supplied with diverse goods from Europe;⁹ but Mahomet, having learned that Tripoli had fallen under the domination of a Muslim monarch and having learned from reports of the exploits of Dragut Pasha, was moved to send him an ambassador, accompanied by fifteen men, mostly mounted on camels, who reached Tripoli at the beginning of the year 1555.¹⁰ He was received by Dragut with all possible pomp and magnificance and entertained during his stay in a splendid manner. This ambassador was a pure negro. Having presented his credentials, which were written in Arabic, he stated the object of his embassy, its aim being to establish between Dragut and his master, the king, a relation of friendship and commerce of Europe lacking in Borno. Dragut appeared extremely satisfied to find himself sought after by a potentate so famous and distant from his domains. He promised the ambassador that

he would be at pains to please his master. It was agreed what merchandise was to be sent to Borno and what was to be sent from Borno in exchange, and the ambassador, very satisfied with the conduct and civility of Dragut, took leave of him to return to his country. At his departure he was furnished with arms, horses and several elegant manufactures of Europe which the king of Borno received with great satisfaction. The commerce between Borno and Tripoli has always been maintained from that time down to our age.....”

Mai Idris Aloma and the Ottoman Turks.

In the course of a visit to Istanbul in summer 1966, I recovered two versions of a letter from the Ottoman sultan Murad III (1574 — 95) to Mai Idris Aloma of Borno. The two versions are preserved in the Turkish Archives in a kind of “official-register” called *Muhimme Defteri*. This register contains copies of *Fermans* or decrees addressed to officials in all parts of the Empire, and in addition copies of letters dispatched to foreign lands. In its entirety the *Muhimme Defteri* covers a period of three hundred years from the middle of the sixteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century, and consists of 250 volumes apart from the supplements.

The two versions of the letter in question are in Arabic in the chancery language common to both Borno and Istanbul and are different in style rather than contents. Both appear in the register under the entries of 5th Rabil 1,985 (23rd May, 1577), the date in which the original letter was dispatched. Since the contents are the same and the date of despatch is likewise the same we may safely assume that one of the documents was the first draft and the other a second version. The Ottoman Chancery employed a number of scribes who were entrusted with the preparation of *fermans* and instructions issued by the Sultan or the Grand-Vezir. The drafts prepared were then examined and corrected by the Ra'is al-Kuttab (the head of the chancery) before a final copy was approved and dispatched. It would appear in the

case that the copyist in charge of the *Muhimme Defteri* copied the final form as well as the first draft. This probably explains the existence of two versions of the letter of Murad III to Mai Idris Aloma. I have ignored the shorter version and translated the longer one, which I think is the copy of the letter actually dispatched, since it is more elaborate in style and grammatically more sound.¹²

The letter opens with a chain of honorific titles in the fashion of the Mamluk style of official correspondence which had been adopted by the Ottomans.¹³ The section that follows comprises a summary of the contents of the letter previously received from the addressed. We can surmise from this summary that Mai Idris made three requests in his letter : (1) the guarantee of security of life and property of merchants, pilgrims and other travellers passing through Ottoman domains; (2) the supply of military aid to assist Borno in the Jihad against the local non-Muslims; (3) the ceding of the fortress of Q.ran to Borno. In his reply Murad seems to be agreeable regarding the first and second requests, provided he is recognised as the Caliph of the Muslim community at large. As for the third request he categorically refuses to be committed.

The fortress in question was probably one of the numerous strongholds in the Gatrún Oasis, in the southernmost limits of Fezzan. Hans Vischer, the German traveller who crossed the desert from Tripoli to Borno in 1906, following the Fezzan-Kawar route describes these strongholds as follows :

“A number of solid square mud castles and many remains of walls and trenches among the struggling palm-groves gives one an idea of the former prosperity of the oasis. In the past, as in the present, the inhabitants must have often suffered from sudden raids. These castles, with their large court yards and deep wells, were built as strongholds against the robber foes, and still serve the people of Tejerri and Bilma as refuge when they hear news of a Tuarek *rhazzia*”.¹⁴

Almost a century before Vischer, Captain Lyon described a castle in Tejerri as follows :

“The castle walls were about thirty feet thick at bottom and ten at top, and were composed, as usual, of mud, having small loopholes for musquetry. It formerly had commanded the town, but was at this time in a ruined state”.¹⁵

Tejerri, a small town of about 250 inhabitants at the time of Captain Lyon's visit had been for centuries, previously, a “resting-place” for the caravans from Borno, Wadai and the central sudan. Between Borno and Fezzan, Bilma in the Kavar region was the first “resting-place”, and Tejerri, in the Gatrūn oasis, the second. The distance between the two places was 18 days of 8 or 9 hours march per day. Tejerri was open to the sudden raids of the Awlad Sulaiman from the north and the Tuareg from the west, and it was for this reason that it was heavily fortified.

It would appear that Mai Idris eventually obtained a reasonable quantity of arms and Turkish troops from the Ottoman provinces of North Africa. We learn from Imam Ahmad b. Fartuwa that the Borno army under Mai Idris included many Turkish musketeers who decided the issue of the most serious battles.¹⁶ Their role, for example, was decisive in the capture of the strong pagan fortress of Amsaka, situated between Gamarghu and Mandara.¹⁶

Relations with Morocco.

In 1582, the same ambassador who had previously visited Istanbul and returned with Murad's letter, was sent this time to Morocco with a large entourage of attendants and a rich present. Al-Fishtāli, the chief wazir and secretary of Mawlai Ahmad al-Mansur gives a very picturesque account of the gorgeous pageantry and elaborate court etiquette with which the Borno ambassador was received. First, he passed through a long regiment of Turkish soldiers before he reached the diwan where the dignitaries sat. There, he sat down for a while before he was led by the wazir through yet another guard of honour

before he was received by the Moroccan potentate. Having delivered his message and presented the presents which he had brought, he was led out with great pomp again to the court of the heir-apparent to whom he also paid his respects.

The purpose of the mission, says al-Fishtāli was to request the Moroccan sultan to supply Borno with troops, muskets and canons. Unfortunately, there was some discrepancy between the oral message of the ambassador and what was actually written in the letter. So the promise of military aid was to be withheld until the discrepancy had been clarified. Nonetheless the ambassador did not return empty-handed. He brought with him a number of horses and various honorary robes as presents to his sultan.

It was not long before this same ambassador returned to Morocco with a second letter. Although in this second letter the purpose of the mission was clearly stated, Mawlai Ahmad al-Mansūr refused to be committed. He maintained that before any military aid was to be extended to Borno Mai Idris must perform the *bai'a* to the sole and only legitimate Caliph of the Muslim Community. He argued further that the Caliphate is the prerogative of Quraish, the tribe of the Prophet, and that among all the Muslim rulers of the time he was the only Qurashite, and more important, the only descendant of the Prophet. To support his arguments he quoted a tradition attributed to the Prophet which says: "The Caliphs are from Quraish, the *qadis* from the Ansār and the *mu'azzins* from the Ethiopians". Overwhelmed by the rhetoric of this argument, the Borno ambassador declared that he was certain that his sultan would perform the *bai'a* as required. He requested that a draft of the oath of allegiance be prepared for him to take to his Sultan for endorsement. His request was granted and he returned home with the document.

The illustrious ambassador was sent to Morocco for the third time after the document had been, according to al-Fishtali, duly signed by Mai Idris. He died on the way but his companions reached Marrakesh and delivered the message.

R E F E R E N C E S

1. Abdullahi Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan", *History of West Africa*, edited by J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, London 1971, Vol. I, p.172.
2. *Diwan Salatin Barmu*, Kano 1930, p.131.
3. Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-ibar*, Cairo, 1284 A. H., Vol.VII, pp.310 — 11.
4. al-Maqrizi (d.1442), *Kitab al-Khitat*. Cairo, 1324 A.H. Vol.IV, p.195.
5. Omer Abdel Raziq El-Nagar, *West Africa and the Muslim Pilgrimage*, (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1969), p.127.
6. See Appendix 1, below.
7. Abdullahi Smith, *op.cit.* pp.181 — 83.
8. Dragut was a Corsair captain who had entered Ottoman service and took part in the capture of Tripoli. He was appointed governor of Tripoli by Sulaiman the Magnificent, the Ottoman Sultan, and remained in office until his death in 1565 A.D.
9. The Knights of St. John of Malta were in control of Tripoli from 1530 to 1551 when it was captured by the Ottoman Turks.
10. The chronology of the French surgeon is notoriously inaccurate. The Sultan of Borno who maintained commercial relations with the Knights of St. John appear to have been Mai Muhammed b. Idris (c.1527 — 1545), while the embassy of 1555 must have been sent by Dunama b. Muhammad (c. 1546 — 1564).
11. Bibliotheque nationale, Paris, Fonds Francais MSS 12219, 12220; extracts in *Bulletin de la Societe des Antiquaires de France*, 1925; translated by Abdullahi Smith.
12. See Appendix I below.
13. al-Qalqashandi gives an elaborate list of honorific titles used by the Mamluks which largely correspond with the titles in this letter. See *Subh al-a sha*, Cairo, 1913, Vol. V, pp.5 — 35.
14. Hans Vischer, *Across the Sahara from Tripoli to Borno*, London, 1910, p.186.
15. Capt. G. F. Lyon, *Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the Years 1818, 19 and 20*. London 1821, p.15.
16. Ibn Fartuwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 — 5.

APPENDIX I

A LETTER FROM UTHMAN B. IDRIS, SULTAN OF BORNO TO BARQUQ, THE MAMLUK SULTAN OF EGYPT.¹

"Praise be to God who created writing as means of communication between distant men, an interpreter between neighbours, a vehicle of greeting between friends, a source of delight among the *ulama'* and of sorrow among the unlettered. Verily, had it not been for it, communication would have ceased and transactions would have become impossible. And the blessings of God be upon our Chosen Prophet and Noble Messenger with whom God has closed up the door of prophethood and sealed it — verily, he is the last Messenger commissioned to carry good tidings, warn, and call to God, and the bright lamp that kindles over the ages as long the pigeons coo and the dawn follows sun-set. After him come Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, may God be pleased with all of them.

From him who depends on God the Exalted, the noble king, the sword of Islam, the spring of the orphans, the brave warrior, the protector of the affairs of the Merciful, the victorious commander at every time and place, the just and pious ruler, the pride of religion, the ornament of Islam, the 'pole' (*qutb*) of sainthood, the descendant of the noble forefathers, the cave of secrets, the bright lamp, king Abu Amr Uthman b. al-Hajj Idris, the deceased, Commander of the Faithful (*amir al-mu'minin*), may God bless his grave and preserve his kingdom for his offspring. [These words emanate from the tongue of our scribe and not from ours, since we do not boast.]

To the great king of Egypt, the blessed land of God, and the centre of the world. Greetings, more pleasant than the scent of the musk and sweeter than the fresh rain — water, may God expand your kingdom and increase your authority. And greetings also to the members of your court, your jurists, your *ulama'* who teach the Qur'an and the other sciences, your community, and your subjects, all of them.

Next: we have sent to you our envoy, my cousin Idris b. Muhammad, in connection with a problem which we encountered. The Arabs called Judhama,² and others, have enslaved our free subjects — women, children, weak men, our relatives and other Muslims. Some of these Arabs are polytheists, apostates outside the fold of the Faith. They raided the Muslims and killed a great number of them during a war which broke out between us and our enemies. In the course of that war they killed our king Amr b. Idris, the Martyr — that is our brother, son of our father al-Hajj Idris b. Al-Hajj Ibrāhīm. Verily we are the children of Saif b. Dhi Yazan, the ancestor of our tribe, who was an Arab from the clan of Quraish, as we have learned from our teachers.

These Arabs have ruined all our land, the country of Borno, and have taken our free subjects and our Muslim relatives as captives; some they sell to the traders from Egypt, Syria and other places, and some they keep for themselves as domestic slaves.

Verily, God has placed in your hands the Government of Egypt from the Sea (i.e. Mediterranean) to Aswan, but your dominions have become a market-place. Send forth messengers to all your lands, to your emirs, your vezirs, your qādis, your governors, your ulama and your market supervisors; let them conduct an investigation and inquire into this affair. If they find our people let them release them from the hands of those who hold them captives, and put them to the test. If they say : "We are free men — we are Muslims", believe them and do not regard them as liars. And after you have ascertained this, release them and allow them to return to their liberty and their Faith.

Some of the Arabs, indeed, spread corruption in our land and are good for nothing. They are ignorant of the Book of God and the Sunna of our Messenger, and they regard wickedness an attractive occupation. Fear God therefore, and do not let them enslave and sell our people. Verily, God the Exalted said : "Believers — men and women — are friends of each other; they command the good and forbid evil". He said to his Prophet : "Judge

among them according to what God has sent down, and do not follow their passions". He said: "Had it not been for the restraining power which God gave to some men over others, the Earth would have been ruined". The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say: "The Sultan is the shadow of God upon earth at which the wronged takes refuge". He said: "Believers are like a buildings, they support each other up to the Day of Resurrection". He said: A believer is the brother of another believer; he must not treat him unjustly or hand him over to the enemy". In philosophy (*hikma*) it is said: "The obligation of commanding the good is incumbent upon those who have dominion over the Earth (that is to say, the sultans) and upon those who are associated with the authority (that is to say the *qádis*, the governors and the emirs). The injunction that it is sufficient for those who have no power to remove evil by physical force to condemn it with the tongue refers to the jurists and the ulama'. Condemnation with the heart refers to the commoners among the Muslims.

We beseech you—may God make your life prosperous in your land—to command these wicked Arabs to desist from their evil. Verily, God the Exalted said: "Those who have undertaken the jihad on account of us we will guide them to our parth; verily God support righteous men". The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "You are shepherds all of you, and you are in charge of your herds". In philosophy it is said: "Had it not been for the sultans some of you would have eaten up others". God the Exalted said to His Prophet Da'ud, peace be upon him: "O' Da'ud, We have appointed you a caliph upon the Earth, judge between mankind justly and do not follow the passions that lead away from the path of God. Verily, those who go astray from the path of God will receive severe punishment, because of their negligence, on the Day of Reckoning".

Peace be to him who is guided.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM THE OTTOMAN
SULTAN MURAD III TO MAI IDRIS ALOMA,
DISPATCHED 5 RABI AWWAL 985 (23 MAY, 1577)³¹

This is our noble, exalted and sultanic rescript, our eminent, sublime and *khakhanid*⁴ letter — may God facilitate the execution of its decrees for the good of all the inhabitants of the East and the West. We have promulgated it and dispatched it enveloping a unique salutation, the fragrance of which spreads over the lands, and containing a greeting that permeates the remote regions by the sweetness of its odour, to the honourable amir, the most just, the most exalted the most perfect, the most noble, the most illustrious, the most magnificent, the rightly-guided, the one aided by God, the helper of the warriors (*ghuzat*) among the believers, the supporter of the brave men among the adherents of the unity of God, the person enwrapped with the love of the Community (*milla*), the possessor of sovereignty and sanctity, the ruler of the province (*wilaya*) of Borno at present, king Idris — may God prolong his prosperity and make his aims successful.

Let this reach him, to inform, explain and announce to him that your (sic) letter has arrived by the hand of your envoy who returns with this favourable reply; he who has opened the best gates of friendship, namely Al-Hajj⁵ — may God decree his safety and facilitate his return in happiness.

We have received it (your letter) and opened it with our right hand, looked at the jewels of its expressions which are more valuable than the costly pearls, understood its contents and perceived all that it conveyed with regard to the sincerity of your innermost thoughts towards our majesty and the well-intentioned ties of friendship that bind us to the kings of these provinces (*wilayat*) — verily, you have followed the path that pleases our hearts and demonstrated your desire to obey our commands. Furthermore, we have understood your request that the caravans and the wandering

merchants who traverse the waste-lands and the deserts, and the other travellers who ride the seas, be allowed to pass, as they wish, within our well defended and extensive domains, from one city to another, in safety and security, and that the hand of dissension be prevented from departing and the hand of rebellion be hindered from returning; thus laying the foundations of friendship and constructing the pillars of mutual love. We have grasped all these requests and benefited from the detailed information contained therein, in quality and quantity.

Now, it is not hidden from you that when God, the Munificent, Exalted and Omnipotent, bestowed upon us by His grace a mighty kingdom, there flocked to swear allegiance to us, on account of the Brilliant Sultanate and the Bright Caliphate, the leaders of the great sultans and the commanders of the noble warriors. And every one who dwelt or wandered about in the lands enclosed within the limits of our Radiant Caliphate—in the states of the East and the West and the regions of peace and war—did not fail to thank God for these glories and praise Him for these abundant benefits. We have (therefore) extended the wing of justice for the prosperity of mankind and unsheathed the broad-sword of zeal for the suppression of tyranny and dissension. And we have opened our high gates before the faces of enemies and friends alike, for the disposal of punishment and reward in accordance with the work of each party pertaining to hostility or friendship. Whosoever amongst them took refuge and associated himself with our radiant threshold, with the most sincere intentions, has been saved and has accomplished all his aims, and thereby, stands above his companions in position and rank.

If you, therefore, remain constantly within the sphere of our sublime threshold, and continue to be steadfast in your sincerity, then we will give our assent to all that you have asked for and meet all your requests, in accordance with your wish, except that which your envoy, the bearer of the message, requested orally, namely the ceding of the fortress of Q.ran, one of the citadels of our well-guarded domains. Verily, it has never been the custom of our noble

forefathers nor the habit of our great ancestors — may God, the Exalted King, illuminate their proofs until the Day of Ressurrection — to cede what they held of such fortresses nor to give even a footlenght of their lands and domains.

When this letter of ours reaches you, therefore, your duty would be to give it the best reception and to stand up on the feet and legs of resolution to control the regions under your government and defend them with high-aspiring zeal. You must treat your subjects with utmost diplomacy so as to win their hearts and attract their love. You must establish mutual relations and intimate contacts with the high-ranking amīr (amīr al-'umara') and the other agents of our mighty Sultanate, the servants of our radiant and brilliant threshold who reside in your vicinity, and who are established in the neighbourhood of your land so as to enforce the injunctions of religion, to delight the hearts of the believers, to gladden the breasts of those who are unhappy, to make the hearts united in brotherhood and to repel the calamities of war by force, guided by the words of the Exalted (God) : "Verily, the believers are brothers".

We have already sent to them (amirs etc) in this connection our sublime rescript because the aim of our policies and the goal of our endeavours is to bring the entire subject and the whole human-race under the shadow of our protection and make them prosperous under the shade of our justice. If the enemies, therefore, should take possession of your province and you seek aid from them (amirs etc) or vice-versa, it will be your duty and theirs to help each other with troops, war equipments and amunition, so as to prove to those who are near or far, and those who are obedient or rebellious, that the two states are guarded at the corners and the frontiers from the evils of dissension and disunity, and are prospering at the borders and the interior through perfect agreement and unity; and that owing to the strong union of the hearts they appear as a single state.

held together by common interest, since that is the path that leads to the welfare of the high and the low and the means for the elevation of the word of Islam.

And as long as we continue to hear of your noble characteristics, your perfect qualities, your sincere loyalty and your pure friendship, our love will endure, our friendly relations will be strengthened and the foundations of our alliance will remain firmly fixed until the Last Hour. Verily, the knowledge of the Hour of Resurrection is with the All-Knowing Lord.

APPENDIX III

MAI IDRIS ALOMA AND AHMAD AL-MANSUR, THE SULTAN OF MOROCCO. FROM *MANAHIL AL-SAFA*

by

Abd Al-Aziz

B. Muhammad Al-Fishtali⁶

"Towards the end of the year 990⁷ the envoy of the ruler of Borno — one of the kings of the Sudan — arrived at the court of the amir al-mu'minin (may God assist him) and brought, among the presents they were accustomed to bring on such occasions, over two-hundred young slaves male and female. He found the sultan, amir al-mu'minin Mawlai Ahmad al-Mansur, at his military camp of Ra' al-ma' in the out-skirts of Fez.

The purpose of the message with which his master had sent him was to request aid from the amir al-mu'minin in the form of troops, muskets and canons in order to declare a holy war against the unbelievers who were near them in the remote parts of the Sudan.....⁸ But when the letter was put before the amir al-mu'minin it was discovered that there was a clear discrepancy and an obvious contradiction between its contents and what the envoy had said. That is to say, what the letter contained differed from what the envoy had uttered — a blunder caused by their deep-rooted ignorance and stupidity and the lack among them of specialists in the art of letter-writing owing to the general lack of knowledge of the basic sciences in their lands.

Before the arrival of this envoy, the amir al-mu'minin had resolved to direct his troops in that year to the subjugation of the lands of Tuat and Tikurarin as a first step towards the conquest of the countries of the Sudan and the conquest of their kingdoms.⁹ He was determined to prosecute this object because he was confident of victory; for the troops at his disposal were numerous, his mission was widely acknowledged, and his word was effective throughout the countries of the West (Maghrib). It was for this reason

at he took advantage of the discrepancy between the contents of the letter and the words of the envoy and offered it as an excuse to the ruler of Borno. The envoy returned to his master furnished with a present of well-bred horses and magnificent robes of honor.

And when the envoy reached his master and reported the excuse, the latter scorned the present and sent him back after making his object clear. The envoy found the amir al-mu'minin at his capital Marrakesh and the confusion was removed and the purpose (of the mission) expressed in clear terms. And now the amir al-mu'minin (may God assist him) came out openly with the truthful statement : namely that they should swear allegiance to him and offer their submission and obedience. He explained to them on the authority of the sunna and the revealed Book, that the reward which they professed and for which they showed an inclination and enthusiasm, is not incumbent upon them and they will not be rewarded for undertaking it, if they do not get the permission of the imam of the community — that is to say the amir al-mu'minin whom God has favoured with a descent from the Prophet. Verily, God has entrusted him with the defence of the Muslim realms and set him above and above the entire rulers and kings of the Earth through the Qurashite pedigree which constitutes one of the requisite qualifications for the Caliphate according to the consensus (ijma) of the scholars (ulama') of Islam who are the interpreters of the bright Sunna and the heirs of the prophets, blessing and peace be upon them.

Furthermore, he (may God assist him) ordered them to propagate his mission in their regions, and undertake the fight against their enemies among the unbelievers in his name, and he made the supply of aid subject to the fulfilment of these conditions. The envoy accepted these conditions and declared that his master would accept them and would offer his submission. Then he said good-bye and departed.

It was not long before his master sent back again furnished with a present and a letter. He crossed the wastelands until he reached Tikurarin where he fell ill and died. The authorities at Tikurarin sent the present, and the companions of the envoy who had come with him from his master, down to the capital Marrakesh. The envoy arrived there towards the end of the year 991.¹⁰

On his second journey to his homeland the envoy carried with him a draft of the oath of allegiance which the amir al-mu'minin demanded.¹¹ He asked for it lest some of the conditions stipulated might be omitted owing to preponderance of illiteracy, ignorance and stupidity among them. And when this draft was read to them and they understood its contents, they replied offering their allegiance and thus, they became subjects of the amir al-mu'minin and members of his community.

This is the end of the summary of this document. In its original form it contained long sections and numerous details which we have omitted for the sake of brevity.¹²

REFERENCES.

(appendices I - III)

1. From al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), *Subh al-a sha*, Cairo 1913—19, vol. VIII, pp. 116 — 18. According to al-Qalqashandi the letter was brought by a cousin of the Sultan of Borno, and was received in Cairo during the year 794 A.H. (1391 — 2). Extracts have been translated in Palmer, *The Borno, Sahara and Sudan* (London 1936), p.218, and in Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives* (London, 1960), pp. 77 — 8. The full text reproduced here is my own translation.
2. Judham (Judhama) were a branch of the South-Arabian Arabs, descendants of the eponymous ancestor Qahtan in the genealogical scheme.
3. Basvekalet Arsivi, Istanbul, *Muhimme Defteri* 30/215/496. The letter has recently been translated and published by B.G. Martin in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3, (1972), 476 — 79. The version reproduced here is my own translation.
4. *Khakhan* — A title of Turkish kings in pre-Islamic times. See al-Qalqashandi, *op. cit.*, VI, 37.
5. Ibn Fartuwa gives the name of the envoy in his account of the Kanem wars. He says : "And when we had proceeded a short distance towards the west, we met the messengers of the king of *al-sabdumbula* (slambul, Stanbul) who had been sent to our Sultan in the company of Al-Hajj Yusuf who was well known at their Gate. They were standing in a row, set up according to rank, near the town of Barsalama, and with them were our friend Dirkuma Fatar b. Ghambu and many other merchants". See *Tarikh Ghazawat Kanem*, Kano (1930), p.127; H.R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, I, 69.
6. Abd al-Aziz b. Muhammad al-Fishtali (d.1032/1622 — 3) was the chief *wazir* and secretary of Mawlai Ahmad al-Mansur. He was a reputable litterateur and a poet of some distinction. His work cited here is said to consist of eight volumes, but only the second volume has so far been recovered and published. For the extract see *Manahil al-safa fi akhbar al-muluk al-shurafa'*, edited by Abdullah Kannun, Rabat, 1964, pp.61 — 63. The account of the Borno embassy has also been reproduced, with much more detail, in *Kitab al-istiqa' fi akhbar duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqsa*, by Abu 'l-Abbas Ahmad b. Khalid al-Nasiri, Casablanca, 1955, Vol.V, pp.104 — 111.
7. A.H. 990 — 26th January 1582 to 24th January 1583 A.D.
8. The words omitted are unintelligible to me : "*wa yastamidu minhu ejnadahu al-amamiyya bi-'l-Maghrib*".
9. 'Tuat and 'Tikurarín were subjugated in 990 A.H. (1582/3), al-Nasiri, *op.cit.* Vol. V. p.99
10. A.H. 991 — 25th January 1583 to 13th January 1584.
11. The text of the oath of allegiance is included in the account of al-Nasiri, *op, cit.* Vol.V, pp.106 — 110. It is dated Muharram 990 A. H. (January/February 1582).
12. It is evident from this statement that the *textus receptus* of *Manahil al-safa'* is an abridgement of the original book.

CHAPTER IX

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN BORNO AND HAUSALAND BEFORE 1804 A.D.

by

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Considerable public interest was aroused in this country recently, about the history of the relations between the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno. This was caused by the visit to Sokoto of the twelfth Shehu of Borno Umar B. Ali Bakar al-Kanemi, in September 1972. As was rightly pointed out then, these relations formed a major facet of the political history of the peoples of Nigeria and several neighbouring countries in the nineteenth century. But, as was not made sufficiently clear, these relations were based on almost a millenium of contact between the communities and governments that emerged on the contiguous plains of Hausaland and Borno.

In this essay, I shall attempt to examine the history of the relations between the peoples and governments of the area whose approximate limits are the Dallols Bosso and Boboye in the west; the Lake Chad and the marshes of the Shari/Logone in the east; the Central Nigerian Highlands in the south, and the plain of Tegama in the north in the period before 1804 A.D. This territory about 100,000 square kilometres comprised the two areas known by the respective inhabitants as the 'Kasar Hausa' and 'Borno'. I shall first of all attempt a brief survey of the accounts of the history of these relations in the published works on the history of the area. I shall then examine the primary sources with a view to seeing if the evidence in them supports the explanations and hypothesis given in these published works. Finally, I shall attempt to outline some major, but neglected facets of these relations like economic exchanges and migrations of peoples, together with the cultural and political developments associated with these. As the availability of

sources does not permit a comprehensive survey covering all the communities of the area, I shall focus attention mainly on those that fall within the Nigerian area.

The Dominant View of the Relations.

The dominant view in the published accounts of the history of relations between Hausaland and Borno emanates from the works of Heinrich Barth, Richmond Palmer and Yves Urvoy.² I will not however go into the views of each one of this influential triumvirate. The various explanations and hypothesis they have put forward and the perspective they have established are well known to anybody consciously acquainted with Western historical writing on this part of Africa. I will only give a brief exposition of Urvoy's reconstruction of the history of these relations, as these are fairly representative of the views of the three and are accessible in a coherent form in his monograph, *Historie de L'Empire du Bornou*.³ After this I shall outline the accounts given by some contemporary scholars.

Urvoy traces what he calls the suzerainete of Borno over the Hausa states as far back as the period when the Seifuwa ruled from Kanem, that is before the fifteenth century. He mentions an attack on a kingdom known as Goungara, which he says was situated between Kano, Katsina and Zazzau, by the Mai Ibrahim B. Uthman early in the fifteenth century.⁴ He says that about this time the larger Hausa states started to pay tribute to Borno; but this he describes as 'retablissement de l'ancienne suzerainete du Kanem'.⁵ The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries he describes as periods of considerable warfare. He mentions a defeat of Borno by Kebbi which he says led to a temporary weakening of Bornoan power.⁶ He sees Borno as taking advantage of Katsina, Kebbi and Kwararrafa attacks on Kano to launch raids on the kingdom, which had earlier raided into Borno.⁷ He says that the Kwararrafa and the Taureg of Air terrorised the central Sudan in the seventeenth century.⁸ Urvoy is not however, explicit about the consequences of these wars on Bornoan suzerainete over the Hausa states. Although he mentions a Bornoan attack on Kano in the early

part of the eighteenth century he seems to believe that by the end of that century the Bornoan protectorate was limited to a constellation of petty states which included Shirati, Teshena and Auyo, situated between the larger Hausa states and Borno.⁹

M. G. Smith, on the other hand, while sharing Urvoy's emphasis on warfare to some degree, sees Hausaland as an arena of struggle between Borno and Songhai, from as early as the fifteenth century. He suggests that Borno first established control over Kano and Biram, in order to safeguard against revolt by dissident Bornoan princes and to use these states as buffer against Songhai; and that it was only after the revolt of the Kanta of Kebbi in the early part of the fifteenth century that the other "seven" Hausa states became vassals of Borno.¹⁰ He sees the establishment of what he calls Bornoan 'dominion' and especially "tributary relations" as a stimulus to political and economic change in the Hausa states, especially in Kano, where he sees the increase in slave raiding in the early part of the fifteenth century as arising from the need to pay tribute to Borno.

Michael Crowder also sees the early decades of the fifteenth century as a period when the Hausa states became subjected to Borno, but he associates the emergence with what he calls Borno's "quasi-overlordship over Hausaland" with the successes achieved by the Mai Idris Katagarma (c.1503 — 26) against the Bulala, east of the Chad.¹² He ascribes the causes of the Borno attack on Kebbi to the desire of Borno to prevent Kebbi uniting Hausaland under its aegis : but this attack, he says, ended with a defeat for Borno which weakened it in relation to its adversaries in the east.¹³

He suggests that one of the consequences of these wars was to bring attention to the wealth of Hausaland and this led to the growth of the trans-Saharan trade with North Africa and Egypt and the expansion in the population of cities like Kano.¹⁴

In a more detailed study, R. A. Adeleye puts considerable emphasis on the military aspect of the relations between Borno and Hausaland. He agrees with M. G. Smith that

Hausaland was an arena of struggle between Songhai and Borno, but he goes on further to suggest that "the general theme of the history of Hausland in the sixteenth century was one of overlapping imperialisms."¹⁵ And although he goes into the details of the wars fought between the Hausa states, he sees Bornoan imperial power as a constant factor from the times of the Mai Idris Katargamabe to the outbreak of the Jihad wars in 1804.¹⁶ He describes the international system of the area as one in which there were no agreed codes of international relations and concludes, rather inexplicably, that "in this context power politics is Real politics".¹⁷ He finishes by pointing out the role of Islam, trade and the migration of the Fulani in influencing the historical development of the area.¹⁸

Recently, however, greater attention is being given to the non-military aspect of the relations between Borno and Hausaland. In discussing the relations between Borno and Zazzau, Abdullahi Smith after pointing out the military dimension, goes on to suggest that a reason for Bornoan influence in Zazzau was the position of the Bornoan caliphate as a source of "important cultural inspiration" in the Central Sudan.¹⁹ He mentions the position occupied in the kingdom by officials associated with Borno, like the *Magajin Malam* and the *Bakon Barno*.²⁰ The latter is supposed to have turbaned every new Sarkin Zazzau as the representative of the Mai of Borno.²¹ He also associates the growth of Bornoan influence with the Islamising activities of a family of Bornoan Ulama, who became the *Limaman Kona* in Birnin Zaria.²²

In a paper on Islam in Borno, J. E. Lavers has suggested interesting lines of inquiry by bringing out the important position occupied by the ulama in the political system of Borno and in the educational life of the Central Sudan.²³

The dominant view now of the history of international relations in this area, is that the major form of relations between the states was military conflict arising from the struggle to control territory, manpower and in some instances what has been called the "proprietaryship of the trans-saharan trade at the Western Sudan end".²⁴ Out of

this struggle it is held, some states emerged as imperial powers, like Borno while others, like most of the Hausa states, remained as vassals or buffer states. There seems to be a general consensus that Borno had military forces superior to those of the individual Hausa states and that it used these to subjugate them, from the beginning of the sixteenth century. The growth of trade between the two areas and the development of close cultural links are seen as essentially subsidiary aspects to these relations. It is asserted that although Borno had to contend with Songhai, and suffered a setback when it attacked Kebbi, its imperial dominance over most of the Hausa states remained essentially unimpaired up to 1804. The military assistance which the Mai of Borno gave to a few of the Hausa rulers when the Jihads broke out in that year are seen as a further evidence that these states were vassals of Borno. The military activities of the Mai Idris Aloma (c.1571 — 1603) in the latter part of the sixteenth century; the Bornoan defeat of the Kwararafa attack in the reign of the Mai Ali b. Hajj Umar (c. 1644 — 80/84) in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the Bornoan expedition to the gates of Birnin Kano in the early part of the eighteenth century, are supposed to have resulted in re-assertions of this dominance. The statement in the *Raudat al-Afkar* (*Akhbar al-bilad al-Hausiyya*) by Abd Al-Qadir b. Al-Mustafa and in the *Tarikh arbab hadha al-musamma Kano*, an anonymous compilation on the history of Kano, that several of the Hausa states sent certain things to Borno, are taken as confirmation of the existence of this type of relationship.²

The Military Encounters.

When we examine the records of the military encounters involving Borno, directly with the Hausa states, there is no conclusive evidence that any of these states was conquered by Borno, or maintained as a vassal through the exercise of military force or the threat of it. The primary sources of the history of this area, available to this writer, contain mention of five military encounters involving one or another of the Hausa states directly with Borno. For the purposes

clarity I will outline these before examining their significance in detail. These direct military encounters were (1) The Sarauniya Amina of Zazzau is reputed to have met a Borno army at Gadaz, a town in the north-east corner of the kingdom.²⁶ (2) A ruler of Borno came to attack Kano in the reign of Sarkin Kano Abdullahi dan Muhammadu Rumfa, in the early years of the sixteenth century.²⁷ (3) The Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Kisauki raided into western Borno in the latter part of the sixteenth century and in the following year the Mai Idris Aloma came to attack Birnin Kano.²⁸ (4) A Bornoan army attacked the capital of Kebbi in the mid-sixteenth century and was followed on its retreat by the Kebbi army as far as the western borderlands of Borno.²⁹ (5) A Mai of Borno, in the first half of the eighteenth century came to attack Kano and camped outside the gates of the Birnin Kano.³⁰

Thus we have records of five military encounters involving the Hausa states directly with Borno, in a period of over three hundred years. We have no records of any military encounters in the seventeenth century and we hear of only one in the eighteenth century. Three of these involved only Kano and the other two Zazzau and Kebbi. We have no records of military conflict between Borno and the other Hausa states of Katsina, Gobir, Zamfara and Daura.³¹ But since our sources of the history of this area, in this period, are fragmentary, it is quite likely that there were other encounters whose records we have not discovered, or which have not even been recorded at all. But even if this were so, the fact that the sources we are presently using record so few wars between Borno and the Hausa states, while they contain records of numerous other wars, suggests the possibility that for the *ulama*, *babumas*, *masu kirari* and other recorders of the history of the area, warfare was not a significant aspect of the international system linking together Borno and the Hausa states.

When we turn to these sources and examine them closely there seems to be no conclusive evidence in them to support the picture of international relations in the area that we are given in most of the published works. This picture appears

to be a crude simplification, presenting the history of this area as a succession of wars of conquest and empires, culminating in the British empire at the beginning of this century. This might provide a form of historical sanction to British imperialism, but prevents us from seeing the basic, permanent and complex relations between the peoples and governments of the plains of Hausaland and Borno.³²

The Encounter with Zazzau.

The Zazzau tradition which contains mention of the encounter at Gadaz is silent about its causes and consequences.³³ It could of course be argued that it was this encounter which led to the establishment of the office of the *Magajin Malam*, as a representative of the Mai of Borno. But without a much better knowledge of the political chronology of Zazzau and Borno this will be pure speculation. Zazzau is certainly unique in being the only Hausa state that is known to have had such an official.³⁴ But without more details and further corroboration we cannot conclude that the Bornoan influence in Zazzau arose as a result of this encounter. There are some more substantial evidence and in fact even the meaning of the title itself (*Magajin Malam* = heir of the learned man) which suggests that even if this military encounter had taken place there was a more regular basis for Bornoan political influence in the kingdom of Zazzau.

The Encounter with Kano.

Similarly for Kano, the records of the military encounters with Borno, in the sixteenth century do not lead to the conclusion that this state became a vassal of Borno, as a result of these encounters as is so widely asserted. The account we have of the military encounter in the reign of Sarkin Kano Abdullahi dan Muhammadu Rumfa (c. 1499 — 1503) in the *Tarikh Arbab Kano* is in fact open to several interpretations. It states:

“He returned to Kano and found Dagachi was bent on revolting. If not for Maidaki he would have revolted, for then she had reached the peak of her power.”

in this country. And for that development the Sultan of Kano went out humbly (*yatawaddau*) with the *ulama*. So the Sultan of Borno returned to his country. Then the Sultan deceived Dagachi and took his position and gave his slave the title."³⁶

One interpretation of this account could be that the Mai of Borno wanting to conquer Kano engineered a revolt through Bornoan element around the Dagachi; or that he simply saw such a revolt developing and sought to take advantage of it. The Sarkin Kano helped by the scholars was diplomatic enough to prevent such an attack. After the withdrawal of the Bornoan army, the ruler of Kano hastened to remove the danger posed by this Bornoan group by removing the Dagachi from his position and giving his slave the title. This account could also be interpreted to mean that what actually happened was that a Mai of Borno came to attack Kano in order to prevent the exiled Dawudid elements around the Dagachi from seizing power in Kano and using it as a base from which to attempt the restoration of the House of Daud in Borno. The Sarkin Kano was diplomatic enough to prevent such an intervention which might have had all sorts of negative consequences for his own position, but immediately took advantage of the situation to deal with a threat to himself and the Iddrisid rulers of Borno. In any case this was a much more complex episode in Borno-Kano relations and cannot simply be reduced to Bornoan imperial expansion.³⁷ It seems to have involved serious issues of legitimacy and internal political balance for both the heirs of Mai Ali Ghazi (c. 1476 — 1503) and the heirs of Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Rumfa (c. 1463 — 1499).³⁸ Since the elimination of Dawudid remnants was likely to be the prime political consideration for the immediate predecessors of Mai Ali Ghazi; and the Dagachi was perhaps the last powerful descendant of Daud, being a successor to the Mai Uthman Kalinwama B. Daud, the thirty-eighth Mai, who was exiled to Hausaland, the second interpretation is more feasible.³⁹ But whatever interpretation is accepted, and further research into documentary evidence and oral tradition will undoubtedly throw

more light on this, there is no evidence in this account that this encounter resulted in the conquest of Kano, or its transformation into a vassal of Borno, especially when the encounter is seen together with another encounter between Borno and Kano in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Although our imprecise knowledge of the political chronology of Borno and Kano limits the confidence with which we can relate events recorded in the sources of the two states, it seems likely that the military encounter between Kano and Borno which the *Tarikh Arbab Kano* assigns to the reign of Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Kisauki, was the same as the one described by Ahmed Fartua in his History of the *First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma of Borno*.⁴⁰ This encounter involved Kano forces raiding into western Borno from what Fartua calls 'stockades'. This raiding provoked Idris Aloma to attack these 'stockades' which he succeeded in destroying. He followed this up with an attack on Birnin Kano which he however failed to take.⁴¹ A close reading of the Palmer translation of Fartua's account, does not give impression that this was an attempt to conquer Kano, or to reassert a Bornoan domination over Kano. Fartua treats the episode as one involving Borno and a separate state.⁴² He treats the Kano action not as rebellion but as the breaking of an agreement, or an old understanding, and he refers to it twice as "treachery" the sort of treachery he says which "is practised on the borders of Islam."⁴³ Fartua's explanation is clearly not merely an attempt at justifying the actions of his Sultan for the essence of his account is corroborated in the account of the episode in the *Tarikh Arbab Kano*. Here the aggressive nature of Kano's action is made quite explicit :

"It was he who raided Birnin Nguru because of Agaidamai and he entered it and stayed before *kuka* at the door of the *fada* and he assembled all the people of the country at the door of.....and he ordered that nobody should take anything except goods and horses. And he moved and stayed for months in the bush. The Sultan (of Borno) sent to him asking "what is this you are doing"? and

he said, "I don't know, it is the will of God." The Sultan of Borno was silent. The Kanawa went back home. Next year Sultan of Borno came to raid but he failed....."⁴⁴

The attitude taken by the ruler of Borno in this account, and the rather impudent rely of the Sarkin Kano, suggest what Fartua's account implies, that this action was in breach of an agreement or some old understanding. Thus the very nature of this encounter as presented in both the sources of Kano and Borno does not give us grounds for assuming that it led to a reassertion of Bornoan imperial dominance. In fact by putting together the two accounts we are faced with important questions regarding Kano-Borno relations. What for example was the reason for the attack on western Borno, besides booty? What was the nature of the agreement that was breached? What area did Fartua consider as 'the borders of Islam'?⁴⁵ It is only by turning to questions like these that we can understand even the nature of the military encounters between Hausaland and Borno and begin to grasp what constitutes *real-politik* in this part of the *bilad al-Sudan*.⁴⁶

The other military encounter which involved Borno and Kano cannot be explained away in terms of Bornoan imperial expansion, since we have no evidence how this imperial dominance was established in the first place. The causes and consequences of the expedition of a Mai of Borno to Kano in the early part of the eighteenth century, must await further research.⁴⁷

The Encounter with Kebbi.

Since nobody has sought to argue that the Borno-Kebbi wars of the mid-sixteenth century resulted in the Bornoan conquest of Hausaland we are left with no records of even a single military encounter as a result of which Borno subjugated the larger Hausa states. It is important to note in passing, however, that the Borno attack on Surame, the capital of Kebbi, over seven hundred miles away from

Gazargamo indicates military activity on an ambitious scale, just as the subsequent defeat of the Bornoan force showed the limitations of this type of activity.⁴⁸

Other Encounters.

When we examine the military encounters which indirectly involved Borno and the Hausa states we find it difficult to fit these into the hypothesis which explains the international relations of this area in terms of Bornoan imperial expansion. The earliest such encounter involved the arrival of a powerful and numerous group of Bornoan immigrants in Kano in the reign of Sarkin Kano Dauda b. Kanajeji, in the early years of the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ As has been stated above this force was most likely that of the exiled thirty-eighth Mai Uthman Kalinwama B. Dauda. This force which came with guns and horses was clearly not an imperial expedition sent to conquer Kano, but seemed to have been one of those well-organised groups of Bornoan immigrants who played such an important role in spreading Bornoan economic and cultural influence, about which there shall be more below.⁵¹

Other encounters which involved Borno and the Hausa states indirectly were the Asben civil war of the early years of the sixteenth century; the Kwararrafa invasion in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the attack on Gobir and Kano on Shira and Auyo respectively.⁵² The explanation for the assistance which was rendered to Muhammad b. al-Mubarak b. al-Goddala by Kano, Katsina and Borno in the civil war against another prince Yusif b. Al-Haj Ahmad b. Al-Hajj Ahbasha, who was supported from Kebbi, can only, on the basis of the information we have got, be explained as a coincidence of interest.⁵³ This seems to be the case with the common resistance to the Kwararrafa attacks in the second half of the seventeenth century although in this latter case, the successes of the Mai Al-Hajj Umar against the Kwararrafa evoked special admiration of Muhammad b. as-Sabbagh (Dan Marina) one of the leading *Malamai* of Katsina in the Seventeenth century. The significance of this admiration expressed in a poem

will be touched on later. As for the attacks by the Sarkin Gobir Yakubu dan Babari on Shira, in the latter part of the eighteenth century this has hitherto been explained as a further illustration of Gobir's independence from Borno alongside its refusal to pay *kharaj* and *ghallat* (grains) to Borno.⁵⁵ But when this episode is put alongside the expedition to Birnin Auyo by the Sarkin Kano Babba Zaki dan Yaji, this interpretation of the Gobir attack on Shira is questionable unless Kano is also put in the same position as Gobir or we assume that Birnin Auyo was not under the Galadima of Borno, like Shira.⁵⁶

There is it seems no conclusive evidence in the sources available now, of a Bornoan conquest of any of the larger Hausa states. There are records of a few military encounters which seem to have arisen over specific issues between Borno and the Hausa state involved. But these cannot be put together to form the picture of Bornoan imperial expansion that we get in most of the published works. It seems in fact that military conflict was not an important dimension of the relations between Hausaland and Borno and before we can grasp the nature and significance of those that took place we have to push aside assumptions regarding international relations which arise from the historical experience of Western imperialism.⁵⁷ We must attempt to reconstruct the specific economic, political and cultural relations which establish the conditions within which these relations took place and delve into the conceptions and attitudes towards international relations held by the people whose history we are attempting to reconstruct. Before attempting to outline these other facets of the relations of Hausaland and Borno we shall examine the significance of the various statements that have been made, regarding the payment of "tribute" by the Hausa states to Borno.

The Payment of "Tribute".

In the absence of any conclusive evidence of a Bornoan conquest of the larger Hausa states how do we explain the numerous assertions from various sources that several of the Hausa states sent what is called "tribute" to Borno. The

earliest statement about this comes in the journals of Frederick Hornemann, an agent of the (British) Africa Association, who reported that he was told in Murzuk in 1795 that:

"These regions are governed by Sultans of whom those of Kashna and Kano are the most powerful but they all (either by constraint or policy) pay tribute to Bornu except Cabi or Nyffe, their districts being at too great a distance. Guber pays, moreover, a tribute to Asben".⁵⁸

The most detailed and authoritative account comes in the *Raudat al-Afkar* of Abd Al-Qadir b. al-Mustafa, written in the 1820's in a passage quoted here in full:

"All these regions were in the hands of the Sultan of Borno. The Sultan of Borno had a slave called Bawo, whose origin is not known. What is known is that the Sultan of Borno appointed him to rule these cities, and while he was ruling he gave birth to several children. When he saw that his death was approaching, he appointed them to rule in these cities. It is said that the one he appointed in Daura was not a male, it was a woman who ruled Daura, her name was Daura, and that is why the town is called after her. She was the eldest of his children and had the same mother as Sarkin Kano. Sarkin Katsina and Sarkin Gobir. The inhabitants of these lands were under the rule of Borno. The Sultan used to pay *kharaj* (tax) and *ghallat* (grains) to Borno. They used to take it to Daura and he in turn takes it to the *amir* of Borno. This was the custom which was never discontinued until the outbreak of this Jihad. But the Sultan of Gobir Bawa refused to pay."⁵⁹

Barth who visited this area in the early 1850s on behalf of the British government, made one of the most expert statements, often quoted, or referred to, in discussions of Borno-Hausa relations. Again I quote it in full :

"Every prince at his accession to the throne had to forward a sort of tribute to present to Birnin Ghazargamo, the capital of Borno empire, consisting of one hundred slaves as a token of his obedience; but this being done it does not appear his sovereign rights were interfered with."⁶⁰

It is here referring specifically to Katsina. And in a letter to Cooley dated Katsina 6th March 1853, he went to state that the king of Borno used to send an inspector into "tributary province" to collect this "tribute" and that one sent to Katsina had the title of *Mansa*, copied from *li*.⁶¹

As has already been stated one of the officials in Zazzau is the *Bakon Barno*, whose duty appears to have been to deliver "tribute" to Borno.⁶²

There is that widely quoted passage in the *Tarikh Arbab Kano*, which occurs in the account of the reign of Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Burja dan Kanajeji (c.1438-52), and has been held as definitive evidence that the Hausa states paid "tribute" to Borno from the beginning of the fifteenth century. The passage in the Palmer translation of the *Tarikh Arbab Kano* reads:

"He was the first in Hausaland to give Borno 'tsare or gaisua'. He opened roads from Borno to Gwanja. He was the first to own camels in Hausaland. Sarkin Borno left his country at this time and went to attack Asben, but as he could not find any water for his army he returned home. The next year every town in the west paid him *tsare*."⁶³

These records must be referring to what must have been a well-known aspect of the relations between several of the Hausa states and Borno. It does not seem however as if the thing sent to Borno was "tribute" in the sense of "a tax or gift paid by one prince or state to another in acknowledgement of submission or as the price of peace, security and protection."⁶⁴ This argument is supported by the actual

statement in the *Tarikh Arbab Kano*, when a crucial word omitted in the Palmer translation, is included. The first sentence of this passage actually stated.

“He was the first to give Borno *tarai/tare* for blessings (*tabarraqun*)”⁶⁵

What this *tarai* which Palmer renders as ‘*tsare* or *gais*’ was, is not clear, but the writer of the *Tarikh* is quite specific, he says, it was given “for blessing”. The writer of the *Tarikh Arbab Kano* was quite aware of other type of payments made between states and had stated only a few lines above that:

“Zakzak in the reign of Amin (a) defeated all the lands. Gararrafa, Nupe sent forty eunuchs and ten thousand goro.”⁶⁶

Thus by using the word *tarai* here he might have referred to a Hausa or Kanuri word to explain another type of payment or gift which was quite distinct from *djizia*. It may be possible to equate *djizia* with “tribute” but *djizia*, which in the early days of Islam seem to have meant the payment to a Moslem government by non-Moslems living within its territory, with whom an *aman* had been reached; to develop various meanings losing its precise meaning.

In the passage quoted above, al-Mustafa, was explicit, he said that the rulers of the Hausa states paid *kharaj* and *ghallat* (grains), but his explanations for this the ancestor of the dynasties was a slave of the Sultan of Borno and that this was a custom suggests again that these *kharaj* and *ghallat* cannot simply be equated with “tribute”. The informant of Hornemann, also seems to have been unsure of the reason for this payment, but it was “either by constraint or policy”.

Given the absence of any evidence that Borno subdued these states by military force it seems that if not interested in getting to the substance of the relations between Hausa governments with the government of Borno who put aside the notion of “tribute” which developed in other specific circumstances denoting specific forms

coordinate-superordinate relations, and look for the specific conditions which determined the relations of the governments of the area. In that way we may start coming to grips with the conceptions and notions of international relations which expressed the true nature of the relations between Bornu and the Hausa states. At present we may only be able to outline the conditions and circumstances within which these relations developed. Among these circumstances one of the most important was the natural environment and the patterns of the migrations of peoples, outlined below.

The Environmental Conditions.

One of the basic assumptions underlying most of these accounts of the history of the relations of the peoples of this area is that it is an area of savannah plain, in which the movement of peoples, trade and armies was easy. The growth of long-distance trade, the migrations of peoples and the establishment of large political entities are seen as almost natural responses to an open environment.⁶⁸ As a result of this general assumption, the specific environmental conditions which shaped the relations between Hausaland and Bornu, and which produced some of the basic and regular links between the communities and governments of the area, are neglected.

It is true that the area constitutes one of the largest areas of continuous plains in West Africa, and that the similarity of soil and climatic conditions made it easier for farmers and pastoralists to adapt, when they migrate from one part of the area to another. It is also true that, in some respects, the movement of men and animals was easier here than it is in the more sandy and arid zones to the north and in the more wooded and dissected plateau areas to the south. But even in this area the woodland and thorn scrub areas are very difficult to move through on foot or on horses and asses until a path has been cut through them and the movement of caravans or cavalry forces was clearly not possible without these paths and adequate supply of food and water at certain points.⁶⁹ In any case, people do not trade, migrate, launch cavalry raids, or form large communities simply

because the terrain is open, but do so in response to specific needs and situations, limited by their resources and circumstances. The similarity in soil and climatic conditions, between the two areas, while favouring migrations and trade in some respects, seems to have limited the range of products that can be exchanged. Food grains and livestock form one of the most important items of trade between parts of Hausaland and the Adar and the Asben and some areas to the south.⁷⁰ But these commodities which constitute the basic form of wealth in both Hausaland and Borno do not seem to have featured significantly in the trade of the two areas, except in the exceptional circumstances of a famine or animal plagues.⁷¹ It is to such aspects of the relationship between man and environment and man and man on the plains that we must turn to and not simply assume that there were large scale movements of cavalry, caravans and extensive empires because these plains were "open".

Although our knowledge of the economic history of the area before 1804 is extremely fragmentary, we can begin to come to grips with the main outline of the international relations of the area by attempting to work out the general pattern of economic relations. At present this can only be done by supplementing our limited information by drawing inferences from the descriptions of the situation as it obtained in the nineteenth century.

One deduction that we can with some confidence make, is that the location of the major sources of natron in this area in parts of Borno was one of the important factors that led to the growth and maintenance of regular economic relations between Borno and Hausaland.⁷²

Natron and Salt.

Natron, in its loose *tsabage*, form still constitutes one of the basic ingredients for food and medicinal preparations in Hausaland.⁷³ By the beginning of the nineteenth century it was one of the important commodities of trade in a large area extending to the coast, west to the Volta region north to Asben and Adar.⁷⁴ While travelling in this region in the 1820s Hugh Clapperton noted that one of the main

commodities traders from Hausaland obtained from Borno as natron.⁷⁵ He met these traders taking it south to exchange it for beads, slaves and kolanuts and observed at Matunga, the old capital of the Alafinate of Oyo, that "trona natron is brought here from Borno and sold to all parts of the coast, where it is much in request to mix with snuff and also as a medicine."⁷⁶ Barth, travelling through this area in the early 1850s, leaves us in no doubt as to his assessment of its importance for the trade of Kano and centres like Gumel in the region between Hausaland and Borno.⁷⁷ This natron is obtained from along the shores of the Lake Chad and in a belt of territory stretching westwards from the shores of the lake.⁷⁸ This area also produces a type of salt called *mangul* or *manda*. The salt industry in this part has probably been going on for several centuries, and it has been suggested that the deforestation of parts of north-west Borno was due to the burning of wood by the salt producers.⁷⁹ Although by the nineteenth century this was only one of several sources of salt for this area, it is likely that together with the Fogha valley and other parts of Kebbi this was one of the earliest sources of salt for the areas of Hausaland and Borno.⁸⁰

In any case these are the only two sources of mineral salt located in the area of the two plains. The Bilma and Asben salt trade conducted by the Abzinawa, although it has received more attention, was probably a later development and was likely to be more irregular, coming as it did over long-distances of inhospitable terrain and subject to the vagaries of the rather turbulent politics of the Asben.⁸¹ It is not surprising therefore that the title of the official responsible for the supervision and taxation of the salt and natron trade in Katsina had the Kanuri — sounding titles of *Kanua* and he seemed to have taken charge of the Barebani migrants who moved into what became the important market town of Dutsi in eastern Katsina, before the jihad.⁸² Further research into the trade in the rather common place commodities of *Kanwa*, *mangul* and *manda* will shed considerable light on the history of relation between Borno and Hausaland.

Kolanuts.

Another commodity whose location exercised some influence on the growth of regular relations between Borno and Hausaland was kolanuts. Hausaland lay between Borno and the kola-producing areas of West Africa.⁸³ It was not clear when kola became an important commodity of trade in Hausaland and Borno, but there are records that it was first brought into Hausaland during the epoch of Sarauniya Amina of Zazzau, which Palmer following the information in the *Tarikh Arbab Kano* places in the early part of the fifteenth century.⁸⁴ The opening of the route from Borno and Gwanja in this period was probably connected with the growth of the kola trade.⁸⁵ It is interesting that it was the Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Burja (c.1438-52), who was the first to give *tarai* to Borno, who was also responsible for the opening of this route and in the same reign we hear of the establishment of a market in Kano by migrants from Borno. The early involvement of Borno in this trade together with Hausaland is suggested by the traditions of Muslim peoples in the Volta region who claimed to have moved into the area from Borno and Hausaland before the latter part of the seventeenth century, that is before the establishment of the state of Gwanja.⁸⁷ We get a glimpse into the social and economic network that grew up around this trade in the west in the story of an African slave in Abu Bakr Siddiq, who was born in and enslaved in early 1800's. He says that his father was a trader from Timbuctoo who visited Katsina and married his mother, whose father known as Sheikh al-Tafsir was in the words as Abu Bakr "of the country of Katsina and Borno... both belonging to his family".⁸⁹ Abu Bakr's father who left Katsina moved as a trader in the Volta region maintained links with his father-in-law to whom he used to send gold, and horses.⁹⁰

The emergence of the Kamberin Barebari is another example of not only how this long-distance trade linked Hausaland and Borno but how it led to the emergence of communities linked to the two areas. The group studied by Paul Lovejoy had moved into the Zambezi

valley to settle in Gummi, in the latter part of the eighteenth century.⁹¹ These were professional traders who seem to have specialized in kolanuts. A group of about two hundred people around one Dan Toga seem to have grown and thrown off many others Kamberin Barebari communities in Hausaland.⁹² Their emergence perhaps also reflects the special advantages that Hausa traders with special links with Borno can have. Borno was the source of natron, a major export to the kola producing areas. Borno was also a market for the kolanuts imported into Hausaland from these areas. In these circumstances it is quite likely that a section of the trading community in both Hausaland and Borno would exert themselves to see that their governments maintained good relations. And as these governments drew up a part of their revenue from the trade, and industries tied up with this trade, it is likely that groups within these governments, especially the officials in charge of the markets and the industries like the *Kurmi* (markets), *anbaganzame* (dyers) *Tarno* (weavers) and the *Zanua* (salt and natron) would favour the maintenance of good relations.⁹³ The likelihood that the foreign policy of these governments was influenced by considerations of trade is indicated by the opening of routes by the Sarkin Kano Abdullahi Burja and by a tradition of Katsina that in the mid-eighteenth century the Sarkin Wari Maikere intervened in the politics of Gwanja because the Sarkin Gwanja had cheated a Katsina trader.⁹⁴

Horses.

The position of Borno as a major source of horses for this area has been noted by several writers.⁹⁵ Among the Hausa speaking peoples the abundance of horses in Borno is proverbial.⁹⁶ But unlike the case of natron there existed other important sources of supply and there exist what seem to be an older breed of horses smaller than the Borno breed.⁹⁷ The Asben rivalled Borno as a source of supply of horses for Kebbi and the extreme west of Hausaland.⁹⁸ In the Hausa language the two terms used to describe a horse are *dan Abzin* or *bahargazal*.⁹⁹

In the published accounts of the history of this area, horses have been looked upon almost entirely in terms of their role as cavalry and their, perhaps more important, role as a commodity linking Borno with Hausaland and other parts of West Africa, has been almost entirely neglected. Horses played an important role in the lives of many people of West Africa, not only as the animals used for slave raiding, as is so often emphasised, but as forms of wealth, for transport, and for ceremonies. Horses and horse riding featured in many festivities from marriage, to title-taking to burial ceremonies among many people in both the savannah and forest zones of West Africa.¹⁰⁰ For Borno, this permanent demand for horses must have produced great opportunities for trade but also raised certain problems in its relations with the horse importing states along its borders, like the Hausa states and the Kwararrafa. The dual role of horses as a source of wealth, and as a means of war must have been realised by the governments of Borno from early times. The Mai Umme Jilmi (Humai) whose reign has been assigned to the latter part of the eleventh century has been praised as "owner of the market of the finest horses" in song.¹⁰¹ The Maghrebiene traveller Al-Hassan b. Muhammad al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus; d. c. 1550) described how the rulers of Borno made special arrangements to attract horse traders from North Africa with whom they exchanged horses for slaves.¹⁰² It has been suggested that the privileges granted to the Tura, in the *mahrums* was done because of their special position as horse traders.¹⁰³ A prince of Borno passing through Tripoli in July 1789 reported to have claimed that the horses of Borno were superior to those of Arabia and Babary.¹⁰⁴

There is every indication that the Seifuwa rulers of Borno exercised close control over the horse trade as was done by the government in the 1850s. Barth mentioned that at some time in that period the export of horses to Hausaland had been forbidden, and even met in the town of Borno an official who besides been governor of the province was also instructed to prevent the export of horses to Hausaland.¹⁰⁵ Although we have little information about the

role of horses in the various incidents involving the governments of Hausaland and Borno, of which we have records, the desire for horses seems to have been one of the objects of Sarkin Kano Kisauki's raid into western Borno. In general, this aspect of the relations between Borno and the Hausa states covers that area of close interconnection between economic policy, diplomacy and war, which we cannot come to grips with until we put aside the notion that horses were primarily important as cavalry for imperial conquest, in this area of 'open' plains.

Further research into the history of Borno and Hausaland might reveal a whole new dimension of the role of force in both internal and international relations, beyond the simplistic notions of the advantages of cavalry, chain-mail and muskets. The ability of the *sarakuna* and *attajirai* of Hausaland to maintain large slave estates which produced a part of the surplus which goes into long-distance trade, might actually have little to do with the coercive power of their cavalry. It might be found that it depends much more on the ability of these dominant classes to manage the relations between the *bayin gandu* and the rural *walakawa* in such a way that while the latter makes escape for the former impossible in the early days of enslavement, the position of these *bayi* is stabilised through their incorporation into the social and cultural networks of rural Hausaland. If this was the case then this might be one reason the Hausa states never seem to have developed large military establishments, and it would point to one of the conditions within which these states conducted their foreign policy.

Migrations.

The migrations of peoples between the two areas was another important aspect of the relations of Borno and Hausaland. Many of the dynasties of Hausaland have traditions which either say that their founders came from Borno, or that they had passed through Borno. In fact several versions of the legend of the sons of Bawo associate the origin of

Bawo with Borno.¹⁰⁵ The dynasty that ruled over the Sose-
baki states of Miriya, Wacha, Dungus and Illela claims to
be descended from a prince of Borno, Muhammad Nafarko,
who is supposed to have come into the area in the early
part of this millenium.¹⁰⁷ Another dynasty claiming a
Bornoan origin is found among the Arewa in the extreme
north-western part of Hausaland.¹⁰⁸

Although the real significance of these legends of origin
is not clear, there has been instances in more recent times
of Bornoan immigrants becoming rulers of new kingdoms
in regions close to Hausaland. It was in the early part of
the eighteenth century that Malam, a migrant from Kulum-
bardu in Borno united various settlements to the north-east
of Daura to form what became the kingdom of Damagaram.¹⁰⁹ In the early part of the nineteenth century we
have the instance of the emergence of Lafiar Barebari, c.
the southern foothills of the Jos Plateau, around a group
of Bornoan migrants who seemed to have left Borno in the
latter part of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁰ The feasibility
of migrants from Borno, becoming rulers in Hausaland
therefore, is not in question, even though we have
know more about the actual standing of these stories
Bawo, Ari or a Muhammad Nafarko, in the historical out-
look of the people of the area, before we can use them
properly for historical reconstruction.¹¹¹ Even if they were
only widely believed, they might have influenced the atti-
tudes of the government of this area towards each other.
Certainly there are indications that the scholars of both
Hausaland and Borno had an attitude towards history which
emphasised the questions of genealogy, but the practical
consequences of these attitude on the conduct of foreign
relations are not clear.

The Intelligentsia.

Our sources are more definite, however, about immi-
grants from Borno moving into Kano, Katsina and Zazua
from the early part of the fifteenth century. The earliest
of the groups of which we have records was the group
around an exiled ruler of Borno which arrived in Kano.

the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹¹² A leader of this group took the title of Dagachi in Kano and the role this group came to play in Kano-Borno relations has been touched upon above.¹¹³ This group came not only with an army but with many learned men, with flags, trumpets and drums.¹¹⁴ The Sarkin Kano built a house to accommodate the leader in Dorayi, a quarter behind the present City Hospital.¹¹⁵ When Dagachi became wealthier and better established he built more houses and a market at Karabka.¹¹⁶ This group around the Dagachi seems to have been only one of several migrant groups from Borno coming into Kano in that period. Later in the century we hear of Barebari in large numbers coming into Kano.¹¹⁷ The establishment of Birnin Gazargamo and the consolidation of the Seifuwa regime in Borno seems to have come together with rapid urban expansion in Hausaland, of which there are evidences in Kano and Katsina and Zazzau; the expansion of trading networks southwards, northwards and westwards, to make the fifteenth century a period in which considerable migration would take place in spite of the growth of political stability in Borno.

The coming of a group from Borno under one person who has been variously called Goron Duma and Dan Goron Duma, to settle in Kano in the reign of Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Kisauki in the latter part of the sixteenth century, seems to be a continuation of this trend.¹¹⁸ The group seems to have settled near the Kasuwar Kurmi and the quarter that came to be known as Goron Duma developed into an important trading area out of which we got the wards of Yandoya and Bakin Zuwo.¹¹⁹ There is a tradition that the head of the quarter of Goron Duma, held the title of Goron Duma and was one of the ten leading advisers of the Sarkin Kano.¹²⁰ The area seems to have produced some important scholars. For it is reported that the Sarkin Kano Abubakar Kado reigning shortly after Kisauki read the Ashafa at the house of a Dan Goron Duma Kursiya.¹²¹ The practice of the *sarakuna* joining with the *malamai* to read this book in public continues to this day. We also have mentioned, a Liman Yandoya involved in bringing to end

the wars between Katsina and Kano in the reign of Sarkin Kano Shekarau dan Alhaji (c. 1649 — 51) and a Liman Yandoya, perhaps the same one, giving advice to the Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Kukuna (c.1652 — 1660).¹²²

The *Tarikh Arbab Kano* records the arrival of another group of *malamai* from Borno. This was a Shehu Karaski and two others, one of whom known as Magumi, was appointed a judge by Kisauki.¹²³ His appointment was the second instance of the appointment of a judge in Kano recorded in any of our sources.¹²⁴ The descendant of this Bornoan *malam* seemed to have held this office for at least three generations, as their names are remembered and Magumi's great-grandson is referred to as an *alkali* in the reign of Sarkin Kano Muhammadu Shashere.¹²⁵ Several of the scholars of Borno who migrated to Hausaland seem to have risen to influential positions. They were perhaps able to do this not only because of the scholarship but because they carried to Hausaland the older tradition of active participation in political affairs that seem to have been developed by the scholars of Kanem from the earliest days of Islam in that area. The developments in Kano were paralleled in Zazzau and Katsina where we find *malamai* of Bornoan origin rising to occupy influential position.

Around 1595 was born in Katsina Abu Abdullah Masani B. Muhammad al-Barnawi al-Kashinawi, of Borno parents resident in Katsina.¹²⁶ It was probably his father Masani ("the knowledgeable one") who came to Katsina as part of the wave of Bornoan immigrants into Hausaland in the sixteenth century. Dan Masani became very influential in Katsina and traditions have it that he played an active part through advice and prayer in saving the Borno Katsina during the siege by the Kwararafa in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹²⁷ The Sarkin Katsina Muhammadu Jan Hazo (c.1671 — 1685) is reported to have visited him and humbly thanked him for his role and his house became a sanctuary.¹²⁸ Together with one of his students Dan Marina, the author of the well-known poem in praise of Mai Ali b. Hajj Umar for his successes against the Kwararafa, they led an important intellectual revival

Katsina in the seventeenth century and were involved in serious disputations.¹²⁹ Dan Masani and Dan Marina are now considered as patron saints of Katsina. Dan Masani's position as a leading *malam* and adviser was institutionalised after his death and his name became the title held by his descendants to this day, living in the Masanawa quarter of the Birnin Katsina, around his house and mosque.

A later example of the emergence of *malamai* from Borno to occupy influential position in Hausa kingdom is that of the *Limaman Kona* of Zazzau. They claim to have come from the Kulambardu area of Borno.¹³⁰ And were settled in Birnin Zaria by the opening of the eighteenth century.¹³¹ They formed their own quarter the *Unguwar Kona* and the position of Limamin Kona was inherited through the family. We do not know the exact nature of their relationship with the *Magajin Malam*. But judging from the title it is likely the position of both represented the institutionalisation of the same political and cultural influence.¹³² The *malamai* of Kona are reported to have influenced the Sarkin Zazzau Jatau ruling at the end of the eighteenth century to support the Jihad of Shehu Usman dan Fodio.¹³³ A *malam* from Katsina who took part in the Jihad in Zazzau, Abdusalam b. Abbas, and who became the amir of Zazzau is reported to have lived with them when he came to Zaria in the reign of Sarkin Zazzau Jatau¹³⁴

Professional Warriors.

But the *ulama* were not the only group that migrated to Hausaland from Borno. The records of their migration are more easily accessible. We have however indications that professional warriors also moved into Hausaland to serve under the various *sarakuna*. There was Garga Babar-ge whose *kirari* was "He who knows no talk except *Wachaka Kute*".¹³⁵ Garga was one of the warriors of Sarkin Ungim Ada who rebelled against Sarkin Kano Kumbari (1731 — 43).¹³⁶ That episode seems to have involve migrant warriors on the regions of Borno. There was a Kure-Kare warrior and another warrior known as Furi Baidde on the side of Ada.¹³⁷ Memories of such professional

warriors have probably not faded and it might be possible to still reconstruct this aspect of Hausalands relations with Borno, for as this writer was rather suprised to discover there are still memories of Bako Na Mashi, one of the professional warriors who took part in crushing the rebellion of Adama in the village of Saudawa, in western Katsina.¹³⁸ Another group from Borno who were probably also professional warriors moved into northern part of the Kasar Katsina in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Their leader whose name was Tani, was supposed to have led a group of hundred men from Borno into the area and after presenting the Sarkin Katsina with the arms he had taken from a deserted string of camels, he moved back north, and founded the town of Kanambakashe.¹³⁹ There are traditions that Tani never had trouble with the Taureg because of his reputation as a warrior and he might have been encouraged to settle in this area which was a crossroads of many routes in order to reduce the incidents of bringandage.¹⁴⁰

Pastoralists.

Into the region north-east of the *gulbin* Maradi there arrived in the eighteenth century a group of Fulani pastoralist known as the Tintimawa. Their traditions say that they migrated from Borno to settle in the Kantche region and then they dispersed some moving into the Kanambakashe region and others going southwards into the plain of the *gulbin* Kaita.¹⁴¹ The Fulani pastoralists constituted another important migratory stream from Hausaland to Borno and back again. The Fulani traditions suggest that they first went across Hausaland before they reached Borno.¹⁴² There is a record of Fulani scholars from Maradi coming to Kano and passing on to Borno in the reign of Sarkin Kano Yakubu dan Abdullahi Burja (c.1452 — 60). The late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries seem to have seen considerable migration of Fulani pastoralists from Borno into parts of Hausaland. Several of the Fulani groups in the Kasar Katsina have traditions of migration from Borno. These include the Daneji, Baawa, the Tintimawa, the Dallazawa, the Dangawa, the Tintimawa.

the Gallawa. Here we shall just give the details that are known about the migration of the three larger groups the Daneji, the Yerimawa and the Dangawa, in order to illustrate the significance of this migration both for the social and political situation of eighteenth century Katsina and Kano, and for the success of the reform movement of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio in the area of Katsina, Kano, Zazzau and Daura.

The Yerimawa were perhaps the earliest of these groups to arrive from Borno, and seemed to have been settled in eastern Katsina and north-eastern Kano by the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁴ They claim that they left Borno because one of them had killed a prince in a dispute over women.¹⁴⁵ They are sometimes called the Ambonawa because they say that they came from a town called Amboni in the territory of the Galadima of Borno.¹⁴⁶ The group that arrived in this area consisted of a father and his four sons, who first settled along the Katsina-Daura border in the region of the *dajin* Zorori.¹⁴⁷ From here they dispersed, some moving to settle near Ingawa in eastern Katsina, others moving into Daura and others to the region of Dabatta and Kazaure.¹⁴⁸ The leader of the group in Ingawa was given the title of Sarkin Fulani Dambo, and he seemed to have lived in the walled town of Ingawa.¹⁴⁹ In Kano one of them obtained the title of a Sarkin Fulani.¹⁵⁰ By 1804/05 a group from among the Yerimawa under one Dan Tunku lived in the borderlands between Kano, Katsina and Daura. It was this group that seemed to have taken an active part in the Jihad, inflicting a serious defeat on the armies of Daura and Katsina going to Kano, in the autumn of 1805.¹⁵¹ The name of the more established Yerimawa groups in the Jihad is rather obscure, but the Sarkin Fulani Dambo in Ingawa came into conflict with Dan Tunku who succeeded in carving out an emirate of Kazaure in the Katsina-Kano-Daura border regions he lived.¹⁵²

The traditions of the Daneji say that they migrated from the shores of the Chad in Borno.¹⁵³ They migrated into Katsina together with the Baawa and the Natirbe and settled in Shanono in Kano.¹⁵⁴ It was from Shanono

that the Daneji dispersed, some staying in Kano and others grazed their cattle along the Katsina-Zazzau borderlands. Unlike the Yerimawa of Ingawa, their leaders do not seem to have become absorbed into the the *sarauta* system of either of the three kingdoms. When the Jihad wars broke out two groups under Dudi and Gudindi took an active part as supporters of Umarun Dallaji and these two became the Sarkin Maska and the Galadima of Katsina respectively. Dudi seemed to have become involved in the Jihads in Zazzau and Kano as well.¹⁵⁷

The Dangawa claim to have come into Katsina from Borno in a group consisting of twelve heads of family.¹⁵⁸ They settled at Yantumaki and Kafin Dangi.¹⁵⁹ At Kafin Dangi they settled near a town founded by another Bornoan immigrant known as Duzama, who held the title of the Barebarin Katsina.¹⁶⁰ They provided some support for Umarun Dallaji, and after the victory of the Jihad forces, one Usman Marori, who had studied in Borno, was given the title of Barebarin Katsina.¹⁶¹

We have only mentioned emigrations from Borno into parts of Hausaland, in fact only the kingdoms of Katsina and Zazzau. The records of emigration from Hausaland to Borno are much more fragmentary, but further research into the oral tradition of Borno will undoubtedly yield much more detail.

The Significance of Borno.

Clearly much further research has to be done in Hausaland and Borno before we can grasp the true nature of the relationship between the communities and governments of the area in the period before 1804 A.D. We have, however, seen that even on the basis of the available evidence, war, conquest and military conflict were not a significant aspect of the international system that covered the two areas. The undoubtedly special position occupied by Borno seems to have arisen on the basis on more permanent and regular forms of relations which linked the two areas at almost every point. Borno was an important source of supply, and a market for some of major commodities of trade in the Central Sudan.

For this reason alone the governments of the Hausa states would try to maintain good relations with it, and a section of the traders would attempt to establish special links. Its intelligentsia had developed a powerful tradition of Islamic learning and active participation in public affairs long before the coming of Islam to the Hausa States. In fact there is a tradition that the ruler of Borno called 'Dalalami Maina Dinama' was turbaned by one of the early Caliphs and it was from Borno that Abdulkarim al-Maghili came and established Islam in the Hausa states.¹⁶² The Caliph Mohammadu Bello while discussing the history of this area made it clear that Borno occupied a pre-eminent position arising from its wealth and the training of its scholars. Bello states:

"Before this holy war took place no country in our land surpassed (Borno) in prosperity... There are not found in our towns students and writers of the Koran equal to theirs. It is stated that they remained steadfast up to the time our Jihad began."¹⁶³

This attitude in a more explicit form was expressed by the Katsina scholar of the seventeenth century Dan Marina who in fact referred to the ruler of Borno as an "*Amir ul-Muminin*".¹⁶⁴

It seemed to have been necessary for most of the Hausa rulers to seek to maintain good relations of Borno in order to establish some legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim populations and foster the interests of their traders. The Islamic view of international relations which emphasizes the unity of the Moslem *Umma* encouraged this desire by Muslim rulers to find a place for themselves within a larger scheme of things. The rulers of Borno, who by the end of the fifteenth century were already claiming to be Caliphs seem to have provided a centre for some of the Hausa rulers.¹⁶⁵

It is along these lines of inquiry into substantial political and economic interests and the world-outlook of the dominating groups within the various states that we have to look for the reasons of Borno's pre-eminence and not from abstract notions of imperial warfare. In this way we shall be able to come to terms with the true nature of the relations between Hausaland and Borno, divorced from all attempts to reconstruct these relations in order to sanction recent his-

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2. The attempt to use such a picture to give historical sanction to the British conquest of this area comes out clearly in: Perham, M. *Native Administration in Nigeria*. 1962. p84 and in Bovill, *op.cit*, p233.
3. The whole folklore about Amina requires further study of course; but seems to be about quite important developments.
4. Barth, again on unknown authority, reports that there was a Bornoan inspector in pre-Jihad Katsina known as the *Mansa*, and told Cooley in a letter that he in fact stayed in a house in Birnin Katsina near the place on which the house of this Mansa was. This writer has never come across this title in either the traditions of Katsina or Maradi or in any other source. Letters extract in Benton, P.A. *The Languages and Peoples of Borno*. 1968. pp 296—7.
5. See the sections on economic exchanges and migrations below.
6. Anonymous. *Tarikh Arbab hadha al-balad al-musamma Kano*. (T.A.K.) (edited and translated by H. R. Palmer as 'Kano Chronicle' S.M. III pp97 — 132) Northern History Research Scheme Zerox Volume 1 pp 686 — 7. I am grateful to Dr. O. S. A. Ismail of the Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University for the translation of the extracts from this mss quoted here.
7. As Adeleye does, *op.cit*, p491.
8. The Role of Maidaki, wife of Muhammadu Rumfa, indicates the emergence of the mothers of the kings as powerful force in Kano, similar to developments in Borno. This was an era of serious political changes in both Kano, and Borno it is difficult to see how these internal developments could be divorced from external relations in both kingdoms.
9. Smith, A. "Early States of the Central Sudan" in *H.W.A.I.* p.180.
10. Fartua, Imam Ahmed B. *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma of Borno*. Lagos. 1926. (ed. and trans : H. R. Palmer).
11. *Ibid*, p31.
12. *Ibid*, pp.30 — 31.
13. *Ibid*, p30.
14. T.A.K. p687.
15. See Khadduri M. *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*. 1955 for the importance of the distinction between *der al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* in the Islamic view of international relations.
16. What constitutes *Real-politik* is not the same for every place and every age. Bismark's brand ("blood and iron") only constitutes one variety. In fact the term does not seem to be useful for the analysis of foreign policy because of its vagueness. It is really a political slogan to convey an impression of toughness, and no more.
17. T.A.K. p.124
18. Hunwick, *op.cit*, p.222 — 3
19. T.A.K. p.677 — 78
20. See foot-note 39
21. See sections on migrations below.
22. B.S.S, p.65., p.246; S.M. III, p.122.
23. Anonymous ; *Hausawa Da Makwabtansu*. I (H.M.I.) Zaria. 1970. p.14.
24. B.S.S. p.65
25. *Ibid*, p.246.
26. H.M.I. p14
27. S.M. III. p126.

57. For a discussion of how international relations simply reflect the politics and economy of every epoch in relation to recent European history. See: Lenin, V.I. "War and Revolution; A Lecture Delivered May 14 1917" *Against Imperialist War: Articles and Speeches*. Moscow. 1966. pp238 — 61. Clausewitz, C. "On War" edited by A. Rapoport, Penguin. 1971. pp. II — 80.
58. Bovill, E.W. *Missions to the Niger*. I. 1964. p 117.
59. I have used the translation of the *Raudat al-afkar* made by Abdullahi Smith and Muhammad Al-Hajj, both of Ahmadu Bello University, from texts in their possession. The page reference here is however to H.M.I. p14.
60. Barth, *Travels.....I*. p278.
61. Benton, *op.cit.* p296 — 7.
62. Smith, A. "Some Notes... *loc. cit.* p88.
63. S.M. III, p.109.
64. Various, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Vol IX. 1933. p342.
65. T.A.K., p 678.
66. *Ibid.* p 678.
67. Hardy, P. "Djizia" in Lewis, B. and others (ed) *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol 2. 1965.
68. This view has rather distinguished antecedents in: Forde, D. "The Cultural Map of West Africa." *Transaction of the New York Academy of Sciences*. Series. 2. 15. Bovill, E. W. *Caravans of the Old Sahara*. London 1922.
69. An instance of the sort of limitation imposed on the movement of armies by shortage of water is recorded in: S. M. III. p.109. where it is stated that a Bornoan expedition to Asben had to be terminated because of lack of water. Most of the accounts which dwell on these wars, seem to completely ignore the basic question of logistics, and the limitations they impose.
70. Bovill, E. W. *Missions to the Niger*. IV. 1966. p109.
71. One instance of such a famine has been recorded in "The Song of Bagauda" and it is said there that even the 'Barnawa came to buy grain from Kano. See Hiskett, M. "The Song of Bagauda: A Hausa Kano List and homily in Verse." *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies (B.S.O.A.S.)* Vol.28 1965, p.115.
72. Tilho. *Documents Scientifique de la Mission Tilho*. II. 1911. p583 — 85. Abadie, M. *La Colonie Du Niger*. 1927. p280.
73. The Hausa expression "*Kamca uwar hadi*" indicates the attitude to Kano as a necessary part of any food or medicinal preparation.
74. From the information on the trade in natron this writer has got from *fataken kurmi* and *fataken gwanja* the trade in *kamca* required considerable knowledge of the types needed in each area, although most of the fat carriers carry certain quantities for sale at the *sango's*. The loose tsabage fat seems to be easier to dispose off than the more solid *ungurnu* type.
75. Bovill, *Missions to the Niger* IV, p 616.
76. Clapperton, H. *Journal of a second Expedition into the interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin Soccatoo.* 1829. pp59, 68.
77. Barth, *Travel Ss.....I* p303 — 14; p316, 320.
78. Tilho, *op.cit.* p583 — 85. Abadie, *op.cit.* p280.
79. Schultze, A. *The Sultanate of Borno*. 1968. p81, fn 112.
80. Alkali, M. B. *A Hausa Community in Crisis: Kebbi in the Nineteenth Century*. M.A. Thesis. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. 1969. p25.
81. From the description of Barth and Clapperton, it seems as if by the nineteenth century the salt trade from Asben and Bilma handled by the Abzin was the most important. But Mallam Umaru from Kano listed two

different types of salt traded in Hausaland at the end of the nineteenth century. Only two of these came from Abzinawa. See.

Barth. *Travels*.....I. p262, 303.

Bovill. *Missions to the Niger* IV. p616.

Mischlich A. *Über Die Kulturen Im Mittel-Sudan*. Berlin. 1942. p189.

Harris, P. G. *Assessment Report on Marusa District*. 1920. NNAK/
KATPROF His — 40.

Tilho, *op.cit*, p521.

Borno might have obtained kolanuts from the Fombina area where the following variety were available at the end of the 19th century : *ganjigaga*, *dan laka* and *kotafo*, none of these species of kola seems to have been very popular in Hausaland, but this could have been another source for Borno. Mischlich, A. *Über Sitten Die Kuturen*.....p188.

S.M. III. p109.

Ibid, 109.

Ibid, pp109 — 10.

Adamu, M. A. *A Hausa Govt. in Decline : Yawuri in the 19th Century*.

M.A. Thesis. A.B.U. 1968. p57 : fn 40

Wilks, I, "Abubakar Al-Saddiq of Timbuctoo" in P. Curt in ed; *African Remembered*. 1967. p159.

Ibid, p159 — 60

Ibid, p159,

Lovejoy, P. E. *The Kambarin Barebari: The Formation of a Specialised Group of Hausa Kola Traders in the Nineteenth Century*. Paper Presented at the University of Ghana Conference on Innovation in African economic History. Legion, Ghana. December, 1971. p3.

Ibid, p4

I am only using Katsina titles here as a means of illustration. The Offices seems to have existed in most of the Hausa states and perhaps even in Borno. See :

Barth. *Travels*...I p309.

Smith, A. "Some Notes, *loc. cit*. p100, fn 45.

Palmer, H. R. "Notes on Katsina"... *Palmer Papers*. Jos Museum Collection.

Reel 44. Northern History Research Scheme Microfilm.

Smith, A. "The Early States, *loc cit*. p167.

Fisher, H. J. "He Swalloweth the ground with Fierceness and Rage! The Horse in the Central Sudan. *Journal of African History*. Vol 13, No.3 1972. p380 — 1.

"*A kara wa Barno dawaki*" is a Hausa equivalent to The English expression: taking "Coal to Newcastle".

Fisher, *op. cit*, p 376 — 7.

Alkali, *op. cit*, p

"*Baharghazal*" refers to the area of Bahr al-Ghazal to the east of Borno where horses are bred.

Obayemi, H. M. A. *States and Peoples of the Niger Benue Confluence Area*. Paper presented at the Social Sciences Seminar Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 23 February 1972. p 10. and Afigbo, E. A. *Trade and Trade Routes in Nineteenth Century Nsukka*. Paper Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. VII, No 1, December 1973, pp77 — 90. p 3 — 4

Patterson, J. R. *Kanuri Songs*, W Lagos 1925. p1

Al-Hassan B. Muhammed al Wazzan al-Fasi. *The History and Description of Africa*. III. 1896 p833 — 34.

Fisher, *op. cit*, p383.

Dearden, S. (ed:) *Tully's Ten Year Residence at the Court of Tripoli*. London. 1957. p226.

105. Barth, *Travels*..... I p385; II. p116.
 106. S.M. III, p133
 H.M.I. p14.
 107. Tilho, *op. cit*, p425.
 108. *Ibid*, p 493 — 4.
 109. *Ibid*, p 436 — 37.
 110. Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit*, p 444 — 46.
 111. See Smith, A. *The Legend of the Seifuwa*. Paper presented at the Borno Seminar. 16 December 1972, for a contextual analysis of one of the legends of origins of the dynasties of this area. See Chapter II — of this book.
112. S.M. III. p109.
 113. See page above
 114. S.M. III, p 109.
 115. *Ibid*, 109.
 116. *Ibid*, p109.
 117. *Ibid*, p111.
 118. *Ibid*, p113.
 119. Perchnok, N., "Social Studies of the Area Surrounding Kurmi Market in J. Greenhill (ed:) *Kurmi-Market Study*. 1972. p 70 — 1.
 120. *Ibid*, p70.
 121. S.M. III. p114.
 122. *Ibid*, p120—21.
 123. *Ibid*, p113.
 124. He seemed to have held his court at the *kofar fada*, which indicates close links with the Sarkin Kano. It has often been said the earliest *alkali's* Hausaland used to hear cases in their homes and were often consulted on private capacity as people learned in the sharia.
 (Group Interview Unguwar Alkali, Birnin Katsina. 21 July 1971.)
125. S.M. III. p 115.
 126. Smith, H. F. C. "A Seventeenth Century Writer of Katsina" *Supplement to the Bulletin of News of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. Vol. No 1, 1961. and Bivar, A. B. and Hiskett, M. "The Arabic Literature of Northern Nigeria to 1804 : A Provisional Account." *B.S.O.A.S.* 25, 1962, pp 114 — 6.
127. Badamasi, Alhaji Zakariya. *Letter to Palmer*. Palmer Papers. Jos Museum Collection. Northern History and Research Scheme Microfilm 44. and H.M.I. p41.
128. H.M.I. p41.
 129. See Hiskett and Biver, *op. cit.* for a list of their extant writings. pp. 114—115.
 130. Arnett, E. J. *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani being a paraphrase and in parts of translation of the Inkak'ul Maisuri of Sultan Muhammed* p5.
 131. Sani, S. A. *The Foundation of Fulani Rule in Zaria. 1750 — 1855*. Research Essay. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Department of History. 1972.
132. Smith, A. "Some Notes" *loc. cit.* p.93.
 133. Saidu Sani, *op. cit*, p10.
 134. *Ibid*, p8.
 135. Solken, H. "Die Geschichte von Ada" *Mitteilungen der Ausland Hochschule der Universita Berlin*. XL. 1937. pp150.
136. *Ibid*, — 150.
 137. *Ibid*, 150

38. *Ibid*, p152. Several of the elders of the village of Saudawa seemed to have heard the story of this warrior and remember his kirari. "Yaki Cinikin Bako Na Mashi (Warfare is the trade of Bako Na Mashi). But my main informant was Liman Isa Sauduwa, Ingawa District. 15 August 1972.
39. Lephay, P. *Recensement Canton Kanambakachy*. 1953. Service de Archives Niamey.
40. *Ibid*,
41. Grasset, *Recensement de Peuhls. Tessaou: Rapport de Tournée 1971* — 54. Services de Archives Niamey.
42. The Yerimawa say that they went from Malle from Borno. Mallam Abubakar Yaro Dan Amarya, Ingawa. 14 August 1972.
43. S.M. III. pIII
44. Dankouso, I and Carenci R. *Katsina: Traditions Historique des Katsinaa-waa apres la Jihad*. Niamey. 1970 p 124. (mimeo)
5. Mallam Abubakar Yaro Dan Amarya., Ingawa, 14 August 1972.
6. Harriss, *op. cit*.
7. *Ibid*,
8. *Ibid*,
9. The house of the Dambos of Ingawa, in which they claim to have lived before the Jihad is one of the few houses of the non-royal *sarakuna* of Katsina with two gates, *kofar fada* and *kofar bai*. It is also one of the largest.
10. *Shantali Damau, Birnin Katsina* 22 July 1971.
11. Bello, M. *Infaq al-maisur*. London, 1951. pp 95 — 6.
12. Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *op. cit*, p 472.
13. Group Interview, Galadima's Office, Malumfashi, 26 August 1972.
14. *Ibid*.
15. *Ibid*.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Mallam Muhammadu Tukur Yuguda. Maska, 30 August 1972.
18. Group Interview Kafin Dangi. Kankiya District. 18 August 1972.
19. *Ibid*.
20. Group Interview Kafin Dangi.....
21. *Ibid*.
22. Mischlich, A and Lippert, J. "Beitrage zo Geschichte der Hausa staaten. M.S.O.S. Vol, VI. 1903. pp 190 — 97.
23. Arnett, *op. cit*, p 6 — 7.
24. B.S.S. p, 246 — 47.
25. Lavers, *op. cit*, p 30.

CHAPTER X

RELATIONS BETWEEN BORNO AND FOMBINA BEFORE 1901.

by
Sa'ad Abubakar

Introduction.

The region which lay to the south of the Chad basin was, since the sixteenth century, known as Fombina.¹ But in the nineteenth century, the name became associated with the polity established by the Fulbe through jihad. The emirate of Fombina which was founded by Modibbo Adama was the answer of the Fulbe to the *bone* (hardship) of living under *habe* (non-Fulbe) rule.² The majority of the Fulbe who had become the ruling group in the emirate, were formerly residents of the Borno empire. In fact, the majority of the Fulbe had migrated to the south only in nineteenth century when the jihad the Borno was checked following the emergence of the Sheikh, Muhammad Al-Amin al-Kanemi.³ In this paper it is hoped that the relations between the two regions, the Chad and the Upper Benue basins, would be examined from the early times up to the beginning of the twentieth century. The first two parts of the paper are devoted to relations before the establishment of the Fombina emirate. The last two sections deal with the subsequent relations. In regard to the early period, it should be pointed out that sources are not readily available and so meaningful interpretations of events and developments are not only difficult, but very sketchy and unreliable even where possible.

The sources at our disposal on the early period are virtually all on origins. In this connection, the vast majority of the ethnic groups in Fombina claim to have emigrated from Borno. The most remarkable among these are the Mbundu, Tikar and the Chamba who, at present, inhabit the regions south of the Upper Benue valley.⁴ Similarly, the Bata inhabitants of the Benue valley and the ethnic group to the north claim to have drifted from the Chad Basin to the south.⁵ The

general impression one gets is that of the present inhabitants of the southern parts of Fombina were occupying the Chad basin in the remote past. Palmer for example indicates that :

"[The Mbum] are said to have inhabited most of what is now British Borno at one period..."⁶

It is worth pointing out that the Mbum today inhabit the central plateau area of the Cameroun Republic. Apart from them, other early inhabitants of the Chad basin and its adjoining territories are said to have been the Jukun.

"It does appear that by the 13th century the Jukun adjoined the Ngalaha tribes of Kanem to their north around Gujba and the Mbum to their south. The Mbum stretched from Dikwa to Margi in 1426 A.D."⁷

Similarly, the traditions of the present day inhabitants of the southern regions of Borno speak of other peoples occupying such areas in the remote past. According to Gujba traditions, their area was once occupied by the Kwona, a branch of the Jukun, who were then pushed out by the Ngalaha.⁸ Also, the *Gadzama Chronicle* indicates that present day Margiland was peopled by the Mbum who were pushed south into the lands of Rai-Buba, the region of the Benue headwaters.⁹ Certainly, it cannot be denied that there had been large-scale movements of population into the Benue basin from the north. The two basins, the Chad and the Benue, were separated not by 'an iron curtain', but by a watershed from which rivers flow northwards into the Lake Chad and southwards into the Benue River. The river valleys provided means of easy access to regions which may have been difficult to penetrate. Thus, since Fombina was never at any time isolated from the Chad basin, it can be assumed that movements of people has always existed, especially from the latter to the former, more so because of the apparent geographical disparities between the two regions. Fombina was much more fertile than the Chad basin, it has also a longer period of rainy season.¹⁰ So, the natural tendency for migratory drift was southwards; since geographical conditions were much better and there was much more scope for agriculture in that region.

However, even though people had been gradually moving southwards, just as they still do, the impetus to greater emigration from the Chad basin came with the foundation of the Borno empire. The threats of the Bulala in Kanem compelled the Seifuwa Mais to retreat to the western parts of the Lake Chad in the fourteenth century.¹¹ For over a century since then, the dynasty led a nomadic life, first in the region south of the Chad and then in the west. Finally, in the fifteenth century, the Mai Ali Ghaji established Gazargamo as his base.¹² This established, the Seifuwa created a permanent nucleus for imperial expansion. The period of their fugitiveness had come to an end and so the big issue facing them was to establish their *dawla* (political kingdom). It was therefore necessary to adopt a militaristic policy. Thus,

“the reign of the Mai Ali Ghaji..... set in motion the processes of conquest and expansion which continued with occasional interruptions to the end of the eighteenth century”.¹³

The region west of the Lake Chad became subject to very serious military activities which culminated in the foundation of Gazargamo with an imperial metropolis, under the direct control of the Mais. Subsequent military activities widened the area of Seifuwa political control. These activities, undoubtedly, led to emigrations. While some ethnic groups were subdued, others moved away. But up to the end of the fifteenth century, there were a number of non-Kanuri groups within the Chad basin, mainly in fortified walled settlements. The sixteenth century was dominated by the Mai Idris Aloma and it was during his reign that Borno reached its climax of expansion.¹⁴ The Borno army started to make use of firearms, it had also a section of Turkish musketeers. Idris Aloma was thus able to achieve remarkable military victories where his predecessors had failed. Consequently, the various walled villages were destroyed giving rise to further emigrations of the non-Kanuri groups.

The activities of the Seifuwa Mais increased the extent of the metropolis and so the Kanuri started to develop

more contacts with the *kirdi* (non-Kanuri). By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Borno had emerged as the most powerful state in the north-eastern part of the Nigerian area. Consequently, its influence began to spread. Conquered peoples were enslaved and eventually Kanurised through assimilation, and as new polities emerged in the south, definite indications of Kanuri influence became evident. The new chieftaincies and kingdoms in the region between the Benue valley and the Chad basin were established probably by Kanuri immigrants from the north or by people who had contacts with them. The migration of peoples to the south, which for long had been gradually going on, resulted in increased contacts and the subsequent emergence of new peoples. The Kilba for example, emerged out of

“an interactions between peoples of various ethnicities who found themselves in the mountaineous (region) as a result of waves of immigrations from... the north and west”.¹⁵

It appears that the Kilba mountains served as safe centres for refuge from intense military activities taking place in the Chad basin. Increased contacts also appear to explain the emergence of kingdoms and chieftaincies in the south of Borno.

Early Political Relations.

The hegemony of the Kanuri in the south had never extended beyond the confines of the Chad basin. The Seifuwa Mais probably exercised authority over the northern Margi group,¹⁶ but the vast majority of the peoples and chieftaincies in the south had never been under any external control. At best, the region was regarded by the Mais as one where they were free to undertake military expeditions for the purpose of acquiring slaves.¹⁷ However, relations between the Kanuri and their southern neighbours were not always characterised by conflicts. The influence of the former began to spread among the latter through trade and there were a number of markets to which the Kanuri attended.

The contacts between the Kanuri and the *kirdi* as well as inter-marriages were the main avenues through which the latter were culturally influenced. The foundation of states and chieftaincies in the northern parts of Fombina appears to have resulted from Borno influence. The founders of the pabur kingdom of Biu; of the 'government general' among the Kilba; and of the chieftaincy of Muvya claim origin from Borno. The Biu traditions maintain that Yamta, the founder of their dynasty, was born and bred in the Mai's palace in Gazargamo,. His mother was however a native of the Biu area.¹⁸ The Kilba too maintain that the first *Till* in Hong, Furkudil, was related to Yamta Wala and that it was from the environs of Biu that he migrated into Kilbaland.¹⁹

On the other hand, the Gude of Muvya claim that their ruling dynasty descended from Shua Arabs who had migrated to the Chad-Benue watershed region from Borno.²⁰ The three traditions, quite remarkably, relate to the origin of dynasties and not of peoples. It is essential therefore to examine whether these kingdoms and chieftaincies were founded by real immigrants from Borno or whether they only emerged out of contacts and intercourse with the Kanuri.

The tradition that Yamta's mother was not Kanuri is an indication that there may have been contacts between the people on the Gongola-Hawal plateau and their northern Kanuri neighbours. After all, Borno slaving activities extended well into the south,²¹ and the leading officials in Gazargamo had concubines drawn from practically all ethnic groups. The Pabur ruling group probably emerged out of a definite historical process: through intermarriage between the Bura of the south and the Kanuri of Borno. According to Davies, the Biu kingdom was founded by "mixing the few people he brought with him with the people he found."²² Thus, the cultural influence from Borno, resulted in the establishment of the central authority which the Bura had never developed.

Another version of the Yamta tradition emphasises the point that he was in fact a Kanuri prince, who, on losing

the succession to the Maiship on account of his being a "pagan", moved south and established the Biu kingdom which we know existed at the time of the Mai Idris Aloma.²³ Here again, the tradition differs on another aspect of relations between Borno and the south; the emigration of the Kanuri. Among the Kilba for example, the Biri clan claims "coming from the north especially from the Kanuri of Borno and some of them still wear tribal marks very much like those of the Kanuri".²⁴ There are reasons to suggest that the Kanuri, since the consolidation of their rule in the western Chad basin, had been infiltrating into the Biu and other regions of the south. Firstly, the Gongola-Hawal plateau merges into the Chad basin through an open plain. There was therefore no barrier to the penetration of aliens and outside influence. It is also known that the autochtons of the plateau region were the Bura who lacked "any central government, each village constituting an independent political unit under elders."²⁵ It were these people who subsequently became subject to the Pabur.

The third point in the Yamta tradition was Islam. In this connection, it is said that Yamta Wala was a Muslim, his name has been given as Abdullahi.²⁶ Taken together, the three versions concerning the origin of the Pabur dynasty tend to point to a Kanuri origin. The Pabur ruling group held sway over the Bura who formed the bulk of the population of the Gongola Hawal Plateau. Basically, the two groups speak the same language, but that the Pabur minority have tribal marks similar to the Kanuri. One possible hypothesis is that, probably, the Kanuri in the Chad basin were able to assimilate Bura elements inhabiting the northern parts of the Gongola-Hawal plateau which merge into the Chad basin. Probably, the assimilated elements moved south and established their hegemony as the Kanuri had done in the western parts of the Chad basin. Alternatively, it may have been that Kanuri adventurers from the Chad basin move south and lived with the Bura. But because the latter were preponderant, the former were de-Kanurised through intermarriage and the adoption of the language of the autochtons, retaining probably some elements of the Kanuri

culture, such as tribal marks. They, however, introduced centralised political system patterned on the Kanuris in the north. Other Kanuri immigrants, or influenced groups, infiltrated into Kilbaland and the Chad-Benue watershed region and established their political control.

One weak point about the Kanuri origin of the ruling groups among the Bura, Kilba and Muvya is how to explain the decline of Islam. For, by the beginning of the 19th century, all the ruling groups in the various chieftaincies in Fombina were certainly not Muslims. One possible explanation is that it may have been that the Kanuri immigrants were too few in number and that they were eventually compelled by the circumstances of their environment to adopt the institutions of the people among whom they had settled. The strongest point suggesting Kanuri origin, or influence, is that fact that not only was the structure of the governments in Biyu, Hong and Muvya similar but that the titles of officials, were derived from the Kanuri. The leading Pabur titles were either borrowed direct or modified from Kanuri usage, viz : *Birma* (Barma in Kanuri), *Thledima* (Galadima in Kanuri), *Kokuna* (Kwaguna) *Bundi* (which is lion in Kanuri). The ones taken directly include *Maina* (Prince), *Magira* (Queen mother) and *Kacalla* (military title "captain").²⁷ Among the Kilba, the Kanuri titles borrowed or modified include *Zarma* (Dzarma in Kilba), *Barma* (Birma in Kilba) *Chima* (Chama in Kilba) and *Maidala* (midala in Kilba). Others are *Yarima*, *Magira*, and *Blamah* "Mongari".²⁸ Some of such titles are also found among the Gude of Muvya.²⁹ Undoubtedly, the political institutions of the peoples immediately due south of Borno bear striking resemblance to that of the Kanuri. One apparent conclusion is, either the dynasties originated from Borno as traditions say, or that the Kanuri had had very strong influence on the peoples neighbouring their empire.

Economic Relations Before The Nineteenth Century.

Here again our big problem is paucity of sources. Our reconstruction is therefore based on very sketchy traditions. It has already been pointed out that the Chad basin and

Fombina had never been isolated from one another. Thus, even though we do not possess sufficient materials, the possibility of trade between the two regions cannot be ruled out. The main consideration therefore is to examine whether or not there was flourishing economic relations before the 19th century. But before then, we need to know what type of society existed in Fombina, what sort of products were the people producing, and whether or not such products were in demand outside Fombina. At the onset, it should be pointed out that Fombina was, by and large, a rural country. The inhabitants of the region lived in small self-sufficient communities producing the foodcrops they required. Some of the communities engaged in hunting and the wild animals hunted provided food (meat) and apparel (skins). The farming and the hunting implements, as far as can be ascertained, were produced locally. Most groups had knowledge of iron smelting and iron ore was obtained within the region. The peoples lived in huts made from materials found locally, either mud, or stone walls and thatched with corn stalks and grasses. We have no evidence that the peoples of Fombina needed other materials goods they did not produce. Salt, an important ingredient for all humans, was produced locally, through burning leaves and certain grasses. There is little doubt that prior to 1800 A.D. there was less trade between Fombina and Borno. There may have been inter-group trade mainly exchange of produce and other implements needed for farming and hunting. After all, not all groups were expert in the working of iron.

Borno on the other hand was more advanced than Fombina. Its population, though rural in the main, partly lived in urban and semi-urban centres. For long, trade flourished between Borno and North Africa, as well as with the Hausa states in the west. Trade with the south was very limited. What Borno desired most from the south were slaves, probably for export to North Africa, or to acquire the luxury goods brought from outside by foreign merchants. The slaves were acquired through military excursions from time to time and not through trade. The traditions of the people living on the periphery of the Borno empire,

the Margi and the Higi, do not speak of visits to their markets by Borno slave traders. What they do speak about is of visits to their markets by the Kanuri to acquire foodstuff.³⁰ The Margi and Higi in turn used to 'go abroad' mainly to Borno in the dry season.³¹ Whether this started following the imposition of taxation, at the time of the British invasion, or whether the practice was ancient is difficult to say. What needs emphasizing is that fact that all the communities bordering Borno to the south had never been out of contact with Gazargamo and other leading Kanuri centres in the north. Such people used to move north, probably taking with them food crops and returning with materials not found in their localities.

One of the problems confronting Borno in the eighteenth century was famine, occasioned by locust invasion and probably drought.³² But so far no one has ever attempted to explain how the famines were overcome. The impression one gets is that of the Borno government and peoples not doing anything to remedy the food situation in the metropolis. In actual fact, even if the Borno government did not do anything, there was nothing to prevent traders, both Kanuri and non-Kanuri, from venturing into the south for foodstuff to be taken to the famine-stricken metropolis. After all, Fombina was a very fertile country and its inhabitants were all farmers.

By the 18th century, we have evidence of Kanuri ventures into the south to prospect for ivory. It may have been that trade in ivory had been going on, long before the 18th century. A. E. Afigbo in his paper mentions that ivory trade by the Igala was conducted with the peoples of the north,³³ probably the ivory trade from the south extended northwards to Borno and ultimately to North Africa. In Fombina, it is known that by the 18th century the leading ivory centre was the environs of modern Song. Another region was the valley of the Logone. The desire for ivory led to movements of hunters to the south, and by the beginning of the 19th century, there were a number of Kanuri settlements of elephant hunters in the region north of the Upper Benue valley.³⁴ The hunters killed elephants and exported

the ivory to Borno. This was probably the beginning of a trade that became very flourishing in the nineteenth century.

The region north of the upper Benue valley was also important because of its cotton production. The antiquity of cotton in the region is not known, but, certainly, by the 18th century the peoples of the region had started growing it, and weaving became an important occupation. In the 19th century, Fombina became famous for its stencilled Benue cotton cloth which was exported to the peoples of the Bamenda grassfield.³⁵ Thus, before then it may have been that the stencilled cotton cloth was exported north to Borno and eventually to Hausaland from the Upper Benue valley.

By the 18th century, due to a number of factors, there was a substantial number of Fulbe in the region north of the Benue. Some of these Fulbe had migrated from Borno and others direct from Hausaland. The leading centres inhabited by nomadic pastoral Fulbe were the Chad-Benue watershed region and Kilbaland. The Fulbe communities in Fombina maintained contacts with their Felata kins in the empire of Borno. The Fulbe *jammaiare* (community) had commercial relation with Borno. In return for the *Kilbu*, used in watering cattle, the Fulbe probably exported cattle to the markets of the Borno empire. Thus, despite sketchy and flimsy sources, it is clear that Borno had every good commercial relations with Fombina long before the 19th century. But because of the nature of our sources, only very little can be said and this is in form of very tentative speculations. It is possible through micro-studies of the economic set-up of the numerous ethnic groups in Fombina to build up a much clearer picture of the trade and trade routes patterns of pre-19th century Fombina. The evidence so far available indicates positively that the Kanuri had been actively trading with their southern neighbours. Some had in fact established settlements among them, giving rise to greater contacts and exchange of ideas. In the environs of Song, where one of such settlements was founded, the Gudu people claim that Islam was brought to them by Arabs, probably in the 18th century.³⁶ Another version of their tradition claims that it was a Gudu

man who, on becoming a trader, travelled to the east where he embraced Islam and then converted the Gudu on his return home.³⁷ This tradition suggests that some of the autochthons of Fombina also became traders and that new ideas generally come by through travels. What is also remarkable is the fact that Islam, a new religion came to them through trade thereby confirming the generally accepted view that 'Islam was essentially a religion of trade'.³⁸ The spread of Islam was generally through trade between Muslims and non-Muslims. Borno was the leading Muslim state neighbouring Fombina, obviously the spread of Islam was from that direction. We can therefore conclude that the Kanuri probably prepared the grounds for the spread of Islam among the peoples of Fombina and this came about largely through their commercial venture.

Political Relations In The Early 19th Century.

The 19th century opened with a crisis in the Borno empire. The jihad which broke out in the west was led by Fellata leaders. The Fellata better known as the Fulbe, had been in the Borno empire since the 16th century occupying the western and southern parts of the empire but remained distinct, thus defying assimilation by the majority. Politically, they did not participate in the government based in Gazargamo. But leading Fellata leaders were recognised by the Mais as *cima jilibe* (tribal head). The Fellata paid taxes, grazing dues to the central government and the local leaders in whose lands they resided. By the 18th century, mainly as a result of the weakening of the central government, the Fellata began to deplore *bone* (hardship). Some scholars among them, such as Muhammad Tahir, began to criticise the government in preachings and in their workers.³⁹ There is little doubt that by about the end of the 18th century, the Fellata in Borno was a discontented minority ready to seize the slightest opportunity in order to end what they regarded as hard and difficult conditions. In fact, long before then, some of them began to migrate into Fombina where they thought conditions were much better.

In 1804 the jihad under Shehu Usman Dan Fodio broke out in the Hausa state of Gobir. The Fellata in Borno, led by Ardo Abduwa and Lerlima, led sympathetic uprisings against the Galadima of Borno in the dry season of 1804/5.⁴⁰ The conflicts culminated in the sack of Nguru and the death of Galadima Dunama in 1806/7.⁴¹ The fall of Nguru and the death of the two leading Borno feudatories, the Galadiman and the Kaigama, was a very serious blow to the government of the empire. The rebellion in the west was followed by another in the south. The southern front against Borno was led by Gwoni Mukhtar of Damaturu and was supported by the Fulbe *jama'are* in Fombina.⁴² The Damaturu-Gujba region had been an important Fellata settlements for centuries and they Fellata were known for their opposition to the government in Gazargamo.⁴³ So, in 1808, Gwoni Mukhtar advanced into metropolitan Borno and eventually succeeded in sacking the imperial capital Birni Gazargamo, forcing the Mai Ahmed to retreat to the east. The Mai subsequently appealed to the Kanembu scholar, Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi, who is known to have been very hostile to the Fellata inhabiting the southern shores of the Lake Chad. Following the Mai's appeal, Al-Kanemi mobilised his supporters, the Shua Arabs and Kanembu spearmen, and succeeded in forcing the Fellata out of Gazargamo.⁴⁴ Since that time al-Kanemi became the dominant political personality in Borno and was totally committed to protecting the tottering empire, with a view to preserving it.

The emergence of al-Kanemi in Borno politics checked Fellata aims within the metropolis. The Fellata, for the first time, became the enemy in Borno. Their clans within the metropolis were subjected to attacks and victimisation and as a consequence, some of them retreated to the peripheries of Borno to escape from al-Kanemi's activities. A large body of Fellata entered Fombina where with the aid of the earlier immigrants jihad was started and culminated in the foundation of the emirate of Fombina during the second decade of the nineteenth century. The Fellata who had move into Fombina were *peribe* (refugees) and so

they were very hostile to the al-Kanemi regime in Kukawa.

The early activities of the al-Kanemi in Borno were directed towards the defence of what remained of Borno's territories. The Sokoto Caliphate which emerged was a very hostile power which bounded Borno in the west and south. Naturally, al-Kanemi was concerned with neutralising any possible threats emanating from the west. He did this by being on the offensive.⁴⁵ For our present purpose, it suffices to say that al-Kanemi was never afraid of any possible invasion from the south. This may have been either because the emirate of Fombina was never took off the ground till about the mid-19th century, or because of the truce he concluded with the Caliph Muhammad Bello :

"We profess the same religion, and it is not fitting That our subjects should make war on each other".⁴⁶ Fombina emirate was subject to the Caliph in Sokoto and so al-Kanemi thought that by dealing direct with Sokoto, he could restrain the Fellata of the south. As far as the western border was concerned, al-Kanemi seemed to have agreed upon Bedde country forming the boundary.⁴⁷ But, there was no such boundary in the south and this continued to spoil relations between Kukawa and Yola. While it appears that Borno entertained no fears of invasion from the south, the rulers of Fombina had for long lived with the apprehension of invasion from the rulers of Borno. Before 1826, the Caliph Muhammad Bello in a letter to Modibbo Adama warned him :

"You are also informed that all-Kanemi sent us what he sent us and I replied him what I replied... So take precautions against him. You know the situation with regard to him".⁴⁸

In 1826, al-Kanemi devastated the eastern emirates and advanced to as far as 100 kilometres to within Kano, but was checked by Amir Yakub of Bauchi, and so Modibbo Adama was warned to guard the frontiers of his emirate. In the 1830's following the consolidation of the position of the Fulbe in the upper Benue valley, a number of *ribats* were established on the routes linking the emirate with

Borno. The leading ones were Malabu, Mutheli, Nantina and Korka'e.⁴⁹ The *ribats* were in fact settlements where slaves and some Fulbe lived as permanent war camps; they also served as military check points against any possible encroachment by new comers of doubtful intentions. Fortunately, up to the end of the reign of Modibbo Adama there was not any conflict or misunderstanding with Borno. Even during the Modibbo's Mandara campaigns, first in the 1820's and later in the 1830's, Borno did not appear to have been threatened. It may have been that al-Kanemi gave up Borno's claims on Mandara. By 1847, the territory of Fombina extended to the Chad-Benue watershed and some parts of Margiland. Thus, for the first time Borno and Fombina came up face to face against each other. The sub-emirates bordering Borno such as Uba, Michika, Moda and Madagali, were from time to time depredated by forces from Kukawa. The boundary between Borno and the emirate was underfined throughout the 19th century. The absence of well defined geographical features and the homogeneity of the population between the two polities made the fixing of definite frontiers very difficult. More so because neither Borno nor the emirate of Fombina had established a firm control over the Margi inhabitants of the peripheral zone.

Inter-Governmental Relations : 1846 — 1890.

Both the governments in Kukawa and Yola claimed sovereignty over the Margi. Before 1846, the attention of Shehu Umar was directed towards regaining control of the western marchlands where the new emirates of Jama'are and Misau consolidated their authority. But in that year, Fulbe-Borno hostilities in the west ceased as a result of Shehu Umar's improved relations with the Caliph Aliyu Babba of Sokoto (1842 — 50).⁵⁰ It was then that Shehu Umar turned his activities against the emirate of Fombina sending predatory expeditions against the sub-emirates which emerged on his borders in the 1830's. Before 1851, an officer of the Borno army, Ramadan had been active against the sub-emirate of Uba which formerly extended

westwards into Margi country.⁵¹ Following his campaigns, the territory under the Lamdo Uba was considerably reduced. In the 1850's, the governor of the south of Borno was Kachalla Ali Dendal. Barth indicated that Kachalla Ali was infact governing the south on behalf of Abu Bakr, the son of Shehu Umar.⁵² He was said to be a very ruthless fief agent whose activities were responsible for the emigration of the Margi to the south. Thus, his capacity ruined the rich and populous southern province of Borno. Then, he extended his activities into areas which the Lamido of Fombina regarded as laying within his domain. In c. 1850, just before the visit of Dr. Barth, Kachalla Ali ransacked and completely destroyed the town of Kofa within the emirate of Fombina.⁵³

Kachalla Ali Dendal's action was considered by Yola as an aggression and so the Lamido Muhammad Lawal formally protested to the Shehu Umar.⁵⁴ But this did not appear to have put off Borno. In June 1851 on the occasion of Dr. Barth's visit to Yola, the Borno authorities gave him some escorts who carried with them three letters to the authorities in Fombina. One of the letters was from Malla Ibrahim, described as a former governor of the southern province of Borno, the remaining two were from Kachalla Ali Dendal and the Shehu Umar himself. The three letters all concerned Borno's claim to the territory of Kopa and Kobchi. When they arrived Yola, the emissaries from Kukawa presented the letters to the Lamido Muhammad Lawal who, quite rightly, became very indignant. There and then, he replied that he was not conceding an inch of his territory and that "if Shaik Umar wished for discord, well he was ready and they would harrass each other's frontier provinces by reciprocal incursions."⁵⁵ The claim laid on the territory of Fombina jeopardised the chances of Dr. Barth travelling in the emirate or staying longer in Yola. He was suspected because he came along with the emissaries who brought the letters from Borno. True, Dr. Barth did not know anything about the letters but it appears that the 'foreign office' in Kukawa thought that by sending the emissaries along with him, the Lamido in Yola was likely to be frigh-

tened into conceding to the Borno claims. But, far from agreeing to the claims, the Lamido Muhammad Lawal informed Barth that he was not prepared to allow him travel in the emirate because he had come to them under the protection of an enemy government. He and the Borno emissaries were ordered to leave Yola at once and to retrace their steps to whence they came.

According to Barth, the Borno people had given to their relations with Fombina a hostile character.⁵⁶ However, he points out that Borno entertained no fear because the Lamido Lawal was "too much occupied by the affairs of his emirate".⁵⁷ Indeed, the 1850's was the period of real jihad in Fombina and the Lamido Lawal was more concerned with attempts to extend the borders of the emirate to build up a much more effective government in Yola and to consolidate the authority of the Fulbe in the Upper Benue valley.⁵⁸ The possibility of a Fombina expedition against Borno was quite remote, but so was the possibility of an expedition from Kukawa against Fombina. Since the 1850's, Borno was more or less a 'toothless bull dog'. Its government was in a position of extreme weakness following the *coup de etat* by the Abba Abdurrahman. His arrest and subsequent execution deprived Borno of a very able and experienced military leader. It also weakened and divided the Shehu family. At the end of the 'Abba affair', Shehu Umar surrendered the management of affairs to his favourites among whom were government officials. The Borno army was left in disarray and for over a decade a capable military leader did not emerge in place of the Abba Abdurrahman. Thus, Borno was not in a position to lead a successful expedition against the emirate of Fombina in the south.

After the reign of Muhammad Lawal, Umaru Sanda became the Lamido in Yola and his reign was one of peace at home and abroad. Throughout his eighteen years reign, 1873 — 1890, we do not seem to have any evidence of misunderstanding or conflict with Borno. In Borno itself, the political situation did not change down to the time of the death of the Shehu Umar in 1881. His successors were not as gifted and the Shehu dynasty was bedevilled by dynastic

conflicts which account for the weakness of his government in Kukawa. Finally, Borno was invaded by Rabih b. Fadlallah in 1893.⁵⁹ This, undoubtedly, enkindled fear in the emirate of Fombina. As Adeleye has shown, the overthrow of the Borno government and the takeover by Rabih threw the eastern emirates as well as Fombina into panic.⁶⁰ This eventually escalated into a general commotion in the late 1890's and until Rabih's death in 1900, "fear of him remained an awesome preoccupation".⁶¹

The Rabeh Factor : 1890 — 1900.

It should be stated that Rabih professed to be a Mahdist and Fombina had, by the 1890's, become the leading Mahdist centre in the Sokoto Caliphate. Hayat b. Sa'id had established Balda in the subemirate of Bogo and his activities tended to portray him as an independent ruler within the emirate of Fombina.⁶² In c. 1892, the Lamido Zubairu determined to re-establish his supremacy over the whole of Fombina attacked Balda but was humiliated by the Mahdist.⁶³ Even so, Lamdo Sali of Marua succeeded in burning Balda and this compelled Hayat to emigrate. Eventually, Hayat joined forces with Rabih and this heightened the feeling of insecurity in Yola. It was felt that the two men would eventually invade the emirate and as shown elsewhere,⁶⁴ the Europeans, especially the British Royal Niger Company, exploited the fear of Rabih's invasion of the emirate to its own advantage. The fear of Rabih was such that the Lamido Zubairu was even suspicious of all foreigners.⁶⁵ In 1896 it was rumoured that Rabih had intended to push his way down the Gongola and might possibly reach the Benue valley.⁶⁶ In a bid to acquire arms and any possible military assistance, the Lamido Zubairu made a number of concessions to the Royal Niger Company. In the following year, it was circulated that Rabih had sent his army against the north-eastern sub-emirates of Fombina.⁶⁷ But this was later proved to be a mere rumour. Nevertheless, Zubairu still not satisfied with the military state of his emirate signed another treaty with the Royal Niger Company in order to acquire more arms and ammuni-

tion. However, in 1897/8 Hayat, the Mahdist leader in the Sokoto Caliphate, was executed on the orders of Rabih.⁶⁸ This eased the tension in Yola and finally the fear of invasion from Borno came to an end in 1900 following the death of Rabih in a battle against the French at Kuseri.

Cultural Influences.

It would appear that because relations between Yola and Kukawa had for a long time being very hostile, the Kanuri have had no influence in the emirate of Fombina. This is far from being the case. The majority of the Fulbe who had established their hegemony in Fombina were immigrants from Borno and some clans, such as the Ngara'en, had been strongly influenced by the Kanuri. They were bilingual at the beginning of the 19th century, just like the modern Fellata-Borno. They had also adopted the Kanuri marks.⁶⁹ Kanuri influence also expressed itself through Islamic scholarship and a number of Fulbe had received their education in Gazargamo, including those that had been in Fombina before the 19th century. The leader of the jihad in Fombina, Modibbo Adama, was educated in the Birni Gazargamo and so were the other *Modibbe* in Fombina at the time of jihad.⁷⁰ The Borno experience of Modibbo Adama and the fact that the majority of the Fulbe had lived there for a very long time were of profound importance to the political development of Fombina.

The Fulbe, as is well known, were politically segmented. The largest political unit in their society was *lenyol* (clan) headed by an *ardo* (literally the man at the helm).⁷¹ There were no other titles or officials. Thus, in the 19th century when more elaborate governments had to be established for the emirate and the sub-emirates, the Fulbe had to fall back to the political system that was more familiar to them : the Kanuri's. The early government established by Modibbo Adama in Yola contained a very small body of officials whose titles were adopted from Kanuri usage. These were the Galadima and the Kaigama. The former was the chief adviser to the *amir*. The Kaigama on the other hand, was, like his Borno namesake, the commander of the army and

the chief of police (*wali-al-shurta*). The two Bornoan titles were copied by practically all the sub-emirates in Fombina. It appears that the main reason for their adoption was because the majority of the Filbe in Fombina hailed from the territory which the Galadima based in Nguru formerly exercised control.

In the later years, the office of *waziri* was created in Yola, but the Galadima continued to be the most senior official of the emirate. Another Kanuri title which was adopted was *yerima* and this was applied to each male child of the Lamido.⁷² The daughters on the other hand were called *mairam'en* (derived from the Kanuri *mairam*).⁷³ Another Kanuri title which became fairly common in Fombina was *lowan*, viz, *lowan* Njobolio and *lowan* Beti all in the metropolis of the emirate.

Migration.

The Kanuri also played important roles in the expansion and political life of the emirate. In the region around Song, the Kanuri elephant hunters, who had been in the area for long, teamed up with the Fulbe in the jihad against the Bata. When the sub-emirate was established under Modibbo Hamman Song, the leader of the Kanuri hunters featured prominently in the local government of the region. Similarly, the invasion of *Hosere* by the Wollarbe and Kiri'en Fulbe in the 1830's was spearheaded by the Kanuri.⁷⁴ According to tradition, Kanuri hunters were among the first group of Muslims to penetrate into the regions south of the Benue. When they reported about the suitability of the regions to cattle grazing, Fulbe nomads moved in and eventually colonised the fertile *chabbe* (plateaux). The Ngaundere massif was before the transfer of Ardo Njobdi to the area, governed by his representatives some of whom were Kanuri and these continued as sub-emirate officials when Ngaundere town was founded.⁷⁵

Throughout the 19th century, the Kanuri, in spite of their early conflicts with the Fellata in Borno, went on emigrating into Fombina. In Yola for example, the 1840's and 1890 were the two notable periods of Kanuri entry.⁷⁶

Even though long before the 1840's the Kanuris have been migrating into Fombina, their number increased considerably after 1846. In that year the Seifuwa dynasty came to a formal end following the aborted coup planned by the Mai Ibrahim. Subsequently, members of the dynasty and their leading supporters became subjects to all sorts of attacks. As a result, a large body of Kanuris, members of the Mai dynasty their supporters and sympathisers, emigrated and some moved south into the emirate of Fombina. In subsequent years, other Kanuri elements opposed to the ascendancy of the alien Kanembu and Shua Arabs, also emigrated. In Yola the Kanuri immigrants settled under their own leader who was styled *Mai-Borno* by the Lamido Lawal.⁷⁷ There were similar Kanuri communities in a number of sub-emirates. In Koncha for example, the leader of the Kanuri group bore the title *Mai-Borno* Koncha.⁷⁸ Another notable official in Yola was the *Mai-Kanem*, the leader of the immigrants from Kanem, some of whom were certainly Kanuri.⁷⁹ The immigrants in the 1890's were those fleeing from the activities of Rabeh and the members of his army after he was defeated by the French in 1900. In Yola a Rabin ward emerged following the entry of immigrants during that period. Thus, even though throughout the 19th century Borno was to the emirate of Fombina and enemy territory, the Kanuri were not regarded as enemies by the authorities and the peoples of the south.

Economic Relations In The 19th Century.

Commercial relations had existed between Borno and Fombina long before the foundation of the emirate. But there is little doubt that, as Dr. Barth rightly pointed out, the Fulbe "have succeeded in giving to distant regions a certain bond of unity, and in making the land more accessible to trade."⁸⁰ Certainly, the establishment of a single authority over heterogenous ethnic groups who were hitherto independent, and in conflict with one another, was a big stimulus to trade. Prior to the conquest by the Fulbe, the hostility of the Fombina autochtons to the peoples

in the north, who had been raiding them for slaving purposes greatly limited the development of trade. Undoubtedly, the establishment of an emirate with dependent sub-emirates over a very extensive country changed the situation. The Fulbe authorities in the south became very concerned with encouraging and promoting trade in order to acquire revenue and to keep the supply of essential goods, such as war weapons, going. It is true that not all the various ethnic groups in Fombina were subdued by the Fulbe and so their hostilities to foreigners, especially in view of the increased warfare, were not overcome. However, because the various authorities in the emirate provided escorts to traders whenever necessary, the security on trade routes improve considerably. Undoubtedly, this gave rise to greater intercourse between Fombina, Borno and the outside world at large.

Kanuri traders began to enter into Fombina in increasing numbers since the foundation of Yola in 1840 and by the middle of the 19th century, the region north of the Benue was full of new villages and settlements founded by immigrants, some of whom were Kanuri. During his journey from Kukawa to Yola, Dr. Barth having come across a number of new settlements remarked that "Adamawa is a promising country of colonies".⁸¹ The most remarkable ones were Sorau Barabari and Belem (probably Belel). The former, from its name, was inhabited almost exclusively by the Kanuri. It was described as a "centre of civilisation unusual in this country",⁸² no doubt because of its industrial activities. As indicated earlier, cotton was grown in the north Benue plains by the Bata and leading centres of textile industry were Holma and Zummo, both being famous for stencilled cotton cloth.⁸³ Thus, in Sorau, the Kanuri established an ancillary industry, dyeing. It appears therefore that an important trade in textile goods developed between Fombina and Borno. The other new settlement noticed by Barth was Belem which was founded by the Salamat Arabs who had migrated from Borno at the time of the jihad "to avoid famine and oppression".⁸⁴ In the

north Benue region there were a number of Kanuri settlements of irrigation farmers along the valleys of the Mayo Ine, Mayo Silkan and Mayo Farang.⁸⁵

Certainly, by mid-19th century, trade was flourishing between Borno and Fombina. The leading export commodities being slaves, ivory, textile goods and foodstuff, especially the excellent Bata smoked fish. The emirate was linked to Borno by trade routes, the two most important ones were the *Hirnage* and *Funange*. The former ran from Yola to Sorau and along the river Kilenge to Uba and ultimately into the Chad Basin.⁸⁶ The Funange route on the other hand, linked Yola with the north-eastern sub-emirates, and then from Marua it lead into Borno through Mandara.⁸⁷ It were along these routes that slaves, ivory and other products were exported to Borno. The leading ivory centres were the valley of the Logone in the north-east and that of the Sanaga in the south-east of the emirates. Thus, from the middle Logon regions ivory was exported westwards to Fatewel, which has been described as the "entreport of all ivory trade."⁸⁸ in the north Benue regions. It was also a noted centre of industry and commerce which was linked to Sorau by trade route and then ultimately to Borno. However, the leading ivory region in the emirate of Fombina was the Sanaga basin from where export went southwards to the coast, westwards to the Benue, first at Loko and since the 1880's to Ibi.⁸⁹ Large quantities were also carried northwards to Yola and then exported further north to Borno. Another trade commodity from the southern parts of Fombina into Yola and then exported ultimately to Borno was kolsnuts, the variety called *ganjigaga*.⁹⁰ The kola trade was neither in the hands of the Kanuri nor Hausa but was carried on exclusively by the peoples of the south, particularly the Kombi.

Trade in slaves between Borno and the emirate of Fombina was less important than trade in other commodities. Infact, the vast majority of slaves in the emirate did not enter into trade because it was to the owner's advantage to keep them in permanent employment in the *dumde* (farmsteads).⁹¹ Nevertheless, the stubborn-type captives were

generally disposed off; and members of the ruling group — the amir, sub-emirs, their officials and other notables — used to sell slaves in order to obtain luxury goods brought in by the Hausa and Kanuri traders.

Borno on the other hand, supplied the emirate of Fombina with *turkedi*, fighting weapons, such as swords and horses for the cavalry. But the articles in greater demand in the emirate in the 19th century, were salt and natron. Barth has indicated that "natron and salt.....have great value in Adamawa, and may be used for buying small objects".⁹² Most of the traders he had come across on his way to Yola, and he travelled in the company of a small group of native traders, carried either natron or salt. Another item which Barth noticed as being carried into Fombina was religious books.⁹³ Borno had been a noted Islamic centre for centuries, but Fombina was just developing in the nineteenth century and so it looked to Borno, which had long established contacts with the Muslim World, for the supply of *defte* *dina* (books on religion) as well as writing materials such as paper (*tre lune*) and slates.

Finally, trade in nineteenth century Fombina was conducted on an advanced exchange system. The major 'currencies' in circulation were cowrie shells (*chede dane je*) obtained from the coast, handwoven cloth (*leppi*) and *taje* (*iron bars*).⁹⁵ The last was most common among non-Muslims. The various currencies were used interchangeably. For example, one *turkedi* was equivalent to five hundred cowrie shells, which is also the cost of a tolerable sized elephant tusk. The cost of a slave was *turkedi* or two thousand cowrie shells. However, the *chede* were less acceptable than the *leppi* which was the common currency among the Fulbe in the emirate.

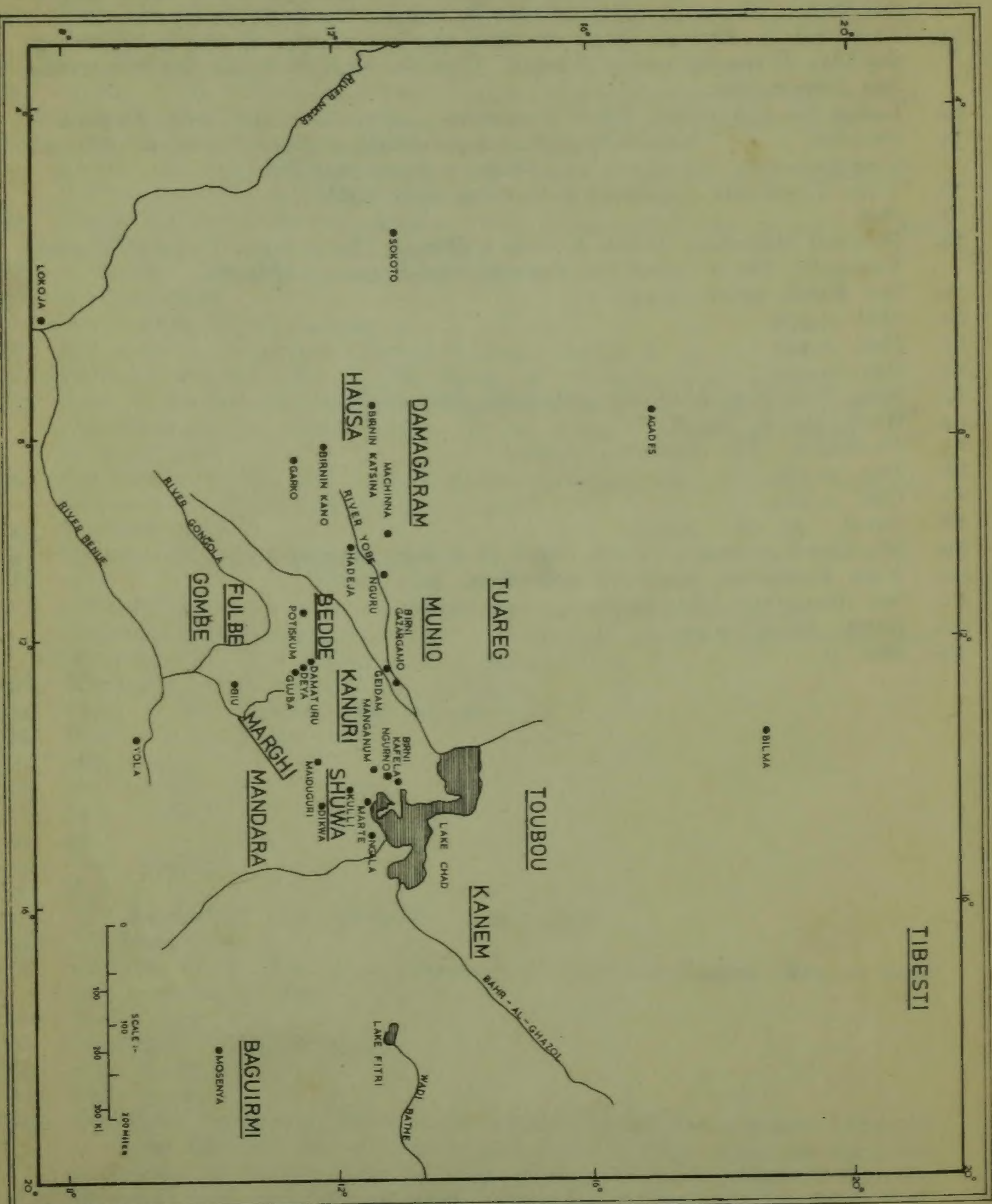
FOOTNOTES

1. The name "Fombina" is derived from the language of the Fulbe. It simply means "the south", not as it was thought, the name of an ancient pagan kingdom. See Barth, H. *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*. 1890 p.428.
2. For more detailed accounts of jihad in Fombina, see Abubakar, S. *The Emirate of Fombina : 1809 — 1903*. (A.B.U. Ph.D., 1970) Now Published as *The Lamibe of Fombina*, A.B.U. Press, 1978.
3. *Ibid.* pp. and also Barth, *op.cit.* p.459.
4. Abubakar, S. *op.cit.* pp.57 — 62.
5. *Ibid.* pp. 62 — 69
6. Palmer, H. R., *Bornu Sahara and Sudan* 1936), p.27.
7. Davies, J. C., *The Biu Book* (mimeo, Zaria 1956), p.24. His sources are varied, they include oral traditions, Arabic documents (though originals are not appended) and early secondary works such as Palmer's books and gazetteers.
8. *Ibid.*
9. The Gadzama chronicle is said to be in possession of Mai Kabama of the Margi District, Bornu Province. See Patterson, R. J. "Special Report on Uje District" *Ethnology Mbum*, 1928 (National Archived Kaduna, NAK; No. 2700).
10. The geographical disparity between Bornu and Fombina came out clearly in the accounts of Barth, see his *travels*, passion.
11. Palmer, *Bornu Sahara*, p.
12. *Ibid*, p.223
13. Abubakar, S. "The Establishment of Fulbe authority in the Upper Benue Basin, 1809 — 47 *Savannah* vol. I, No.1 June 1972 p.69.
14. *Ibid.* pp.234 — 243. For a more detailed account of Aloma's wars, see Ahmad Ibn Fartuv, *History of the First Twelve Years of the reign of Mai Idris Aloma*, 1571 — 83. 1926.
15. Chaskda, G., *The Establishment of the Government-General Among the Kilba* (Dissertation submitted to the History Department, June 1972 in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of B.A. (Hons) in History).
16. "This is the chronicle of the chiefs of the Margi Gazama. They belongs to the Tura Beni Hassan tribe and their title was originally the "Zarma" of the ruler of Borno. They came with the Sultan of Borno from Yamen. They were the "Zarmas" of the Sultan. They came to Ga'ar Gomo with the ruler Mai Idrisa. They went to war. The Sultan sent a messenger to their land, the inhabitants of which were Mbum. It was a land of wonderful guinea corn. They gathered some of the corn and loaded it on camels and oxen and donkeys and beat their men to the Sultan with it. He was placed with the present and he gave them the land. The "Zarma" became Mai Gazama. He was Mai "Kalau".
J. R. Patterson "Special Report of Upe District *Ethnology Mbum* : NAK. 2700.
17. Barth, *op.cit.* pp.429 — 30. He points out that "before the Fulbe occupied these regions, the slave hunting expeditions of the people of Brono often extended into the very heart of Adamawa".
18. See Mbaya, J. W. K. *The Establishment of the Pabur hegemony on the Gongola-Hawal Plateau*, (B.A. (Hons) dissertation, Dept. of History A.B.U., June '72), For a slightly different version see Davies, *op.cit.* p.279.
19. Chaskda, *op.cit.* p.
20. *Lamorde-Mubi Traditions* (collected by author, August, 1968).
21. See Mbaya, *op.cit.* and Davies, *op.cit.* p.279.
22. Barth, *op.cit.*, p.430.
23. See Palmer, *Mai Idris*, the leading states south of Borno at the time of the Mai Idris Aloma were Mandara, Mulgwe and Yamta.

24. Chaskda, *op.cit.* p.
25. Davies, *op.cit.* p.32.
26. Mbaya, *op.cit.* p.
27. *Ibid.* p.
28. See Chaskda, *op.cit.* pp. *Maidala* in Kanuri is the heir apparent and Blamah, probably the owner of town (H. *Maigari*).
29. See Abubakar, S. *op.cit.* p. 90.
30. *Higi Traditions* (collected by author, August, 1968).
31. Kirk-Greene, A.H.M., "Tax and Travels Among the Hill Tribes of Northern Adamawa" (*Africa*, 26, 4, October, 1956).
32. See Palmer, *Borno, Sahara.* pp.252 — 3.
33. Afigbo, A. E. "Trade and Trade Routes in the Nsukka Area" (Paper submitted to the 18th Annual Congress of the HSN, December, 1972).
34. Song District Notebook (D.O.'s office Yola).
35. Chilver, E. M. "Nineteenth Century Trade in the Bamenda (Grassfield)" (*Africa and Ubersee*, XLV,4, 1961), pp. 245 — 6.
36. Arabic Ms said to be in possession of M. Usman of Gudu, 30/9/27, trans; in *Ethnology Gudu*, (NAK. 271 OH).
37. J. Skelly, *Ethnology Gudu*, 1928. p. 12.
38. Trimmingham,
39. See Palmer, *Borno Sahara*, p
40. Stenning, D. *Savannah Nomads* (London, 1959), P. 30.
41. *Ibid.* also see Brenner. I. *The Shetus of Kukawa* 1972), pp.25 — 40 —.
42. Low, V. N., *The Border States : a political history of three Northeast Nigerian Emirates*, ca. 1800 — 1902. (Ph.D. Thesis, University College Los Angeles 1967).
43. See Koelle, S. W., (ed) *African Native Literature* 1854) contains accounts narrated by Ali Aisami; pp.213 — 223.
44. Brenner, *op.cit.*
45. Palmer, *Borno Sahara*, p.269
46. *Ibid.*
47. cAbd al-Qadir b. Gidado.. *Majmu'bad' d rasa'il amir al-mu'minin Muhammad Bello* (Sokoto, 1849). Translation by Abdullahi Smith; see Abubakar, S. *The Emirate of.....* pp.491 — 2.
48. Abubakar, *The Emirate of.....* p.239.
49. Last, D. M., *Sokoto Caliphate* 1967 p.88.
50. Barth, *op.cit.* p.429.
51. *Ibid.* p.412
52. *Ibid.* p.423
53. *Ibid.* p.464.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.* p.497.
56. *Ibid.*
57. See Abubakar, *The Emirate.....* pp. 297ff.
58. Trimmingham.
59. Adeleye, R. A. *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria* 1804 — 1906 1971, pp.110 — 111.
60. *Ibid.* p.111
61. Abubakar, S. *op.cit.* p.411.
62. *Ibid.* p.423.
63. *Ibid.* p.440
64. Especially Europeans. Thus, when Mizon Visited Yola he was suspected of being Rabih's ally, see *ibid.* p.433. Also in 1893 when the Egyptian emissaries to Rabih came to Yola enroute to Borno, Lamido Zubairu detained them and refused them permission to proceed. See Flint, J. E. *Sir, George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, 1960. p. 296.
65. Adeleye, *op.cit.* p.228
66. Kirk-Greene, A. H. M. *Adamawa Past and Present*, 1958, p. 49.

67. Ahmad G. Sa'id, *Mahdist Teachings and Society* (Dissertation for the B.S c. (Govt), A.B.U., June 1972).
68. See Abubakar, *The Emirate*. p.143.
69. *Ibid.* p.205.
70. *Ibid.* pp. 153 — 9.
71. *Ibid.* p. 269.
72. Yerima was a title of an official at the time of the Seifuwa, but following the emergence of the Kanemi dynasty, it was applied to the eldest son of the Shehu. Grateful to Abdulkadir Benisheik, for this information.
73. This too is derived from the title applied usually to the daughter of the Mai. It simply means princes. Grateful to Abdulkadir Benisheikh for this information.
74. Liman Isa and others, *Tarihi Ngaundere*, 1967, (Cultural Centre Yaounde).
75. Froelich, J. C., "Ngoundere : La vie economique d'une cite peul" (*Etudes Camerounaises*, No.43 — 44, Mars — Juin, 1954.) p.17.
76. *Yola Traditions*, (Authors collection, July 1968).
77. *Ibid.*
78. Ibrahim Hammoa, *Tarihi Koncha e Banyo* (June 1967, Cultural Centre Yaounde). He is infact the present Mai-Borno of Koncha.
79. See Barth, *op.cit.* p.445.
80. *Ibid.* p.472.
81. *Ibid.* p.442
82. *Ibid.* p.439.
83. *Song Traditions* (author's collection, July, 1968)
84. Barth, *op.cit.* p.448.
85. Abubakar, *The Emirate...* p.307.
86. *Ibid.* p.322.
87. *Ibid.* p.325.
88. Barth, *op. cit.* p.442.
89. Mackler-Ferryman, *Up the Niger*, (London, 1892), p.123.
90. *Yola Traditions*, (author's collection, July 1968).
91. See Abubakar, *The Emirate.....* pp. 33off.
92. Barth, *op.cit.* p.409,
93. *Ibid.* p.

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